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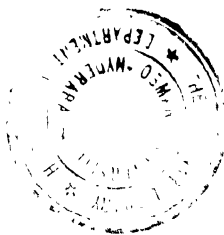
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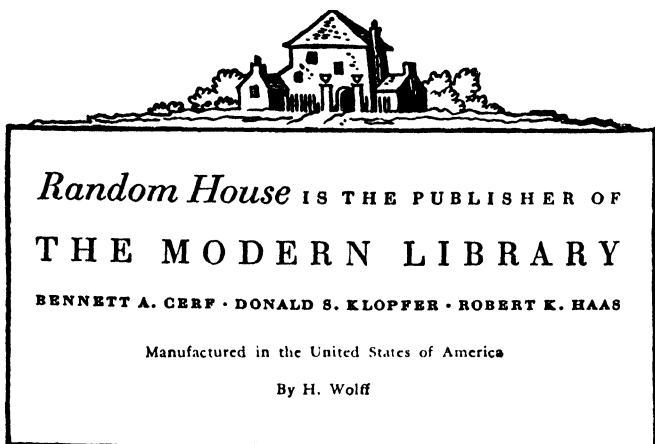
TWENTIETH-CENTURY
AMERICAN
POETRY

Edited, and with a Preface, by
Conrad Aiken



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"The Wanderer" by William Carlos Williams

Edmund Wilson

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C. A.

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PREFACE

WHEN this anthology was first compiled, twenty-two years ago, it was with a very specific purpose: it was primarily designed for publication in England, and in the pious hope of enlightening that country, then singularly uninformed about American literature, as to the state of contemporary American poetry. With this end in view, the editor quite avowedly made no attempt, as he put it, "to cover the entire field" of American poetry, but rather, as seemed to promise a more effective introduction, "to compile an anthology in which fewer poets might figure, and in which, therefore, they might more generously and identifiably be represented." For this purpose, fourteen poets were selected, and with them Emily Dickinson, the latter because she was at that time wholly unknown in England, and because, as the editor observed it, "seemed wise to include in an anthology of the contemporary, one poet of an earlier generation." The little book justified itself, if modestly. The English critics were properly irritated, and made their first annoyed and surprised acquaintance with, among others, Robinson and Stevens.

In the five years which passed before the book came out in America, it did not seem to the editor that the poetic "scene" had sufficiently altered, in its main features, to warrant any great change in its contents. Accordingly, it remained pretty much the same book that the English had known; and in fact it has remained the same ever since. The depression came and went, and the New Deal, and the Writers' Project. And the war came. Indeed, a generation, and more, had passed and quite suddenly it appeared that where before there was one poet, now there were fifty. To the twenty years of twentieth-century American poetry in the original volume, there were now twenty more to be added; and what had in those days seemed at best a very promising beginning was now secure and brilliant in accomplishment. "The best English poetry being written today" — an anonymous American writer made the remark a few years ago to an anonymous English writer — "is being written by Americans." It was quite true, and it is still quite true. The half

century of American poetry which begins with Emily Dickinson is so varied, so rich and so new, as to compare favorably with any but the greatest similar spans in the whole history of English poetry. For the first time, English poetry is really being revitalized on the western shores of the Atlantic. For the first time, American poetry is assured, mature and easy, in an unforced awareness of its wonderful bilateral tradition, its unique inheritance of two separate but complementary cultures. "The European who has settled in America"—the editor noted in his earlier volume—"and who has become the American, uses the English language; but one must bear it constantly in mind that although he has worked few outward changes in the language, he has none the less begun very distinctly to charge it anew with emotional and temperamental and tactile significances, which arise naturally out of his adjustment to a new scene." Mr. T. S. Eliot once observed that the American had one very great cultural advantage over the European: he could, if he wished, *become* European; in that process of "becoming," or acquiring, he could actually possess more than the European, possess it with a fuller awareness. May one not say similarly that the English language, whether as it crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*, or as it passes the New York customs barrier today, has one great advantage over the English language of Whitechapel or Canterbury or Parliament Square or the Banbury Road? It is the English language becoming American.

But let the poets speak for themselves. Here are fifty-five where before were fifteen; and of every sort; and all of them good. As in his first compilation, the editor has on the whole preferred to include such poets as could be represented with a group of poems, and, with a few exceptions, to avoid the one-poem poet. Emily Dickinson remains, both as forerunner and as touchstone. Trumbull Stickney, the natural link between Emily Dickinson and the real twentieth-century "thing," has been given the space that he deserves; he too is a forerunner. If Mr. W. H. Auden is not represented, it is simply because he is really no more an American poet than Mr. Eliot is an English one. For the rest, here is such a body of poetry as must, one dares to believe, become a literary landmark.

CONRAD AIKEN

Brewster, Massachusetts.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY

AMERICAN POETRY



EMILY DICKINSON

"In Winter"

I

IN Winter, in my room,
I came upon a worm,
Pink, lank, and warm.
But as he was a worm
And worms presume,
Not quite with him at home—
Secured him by a string
To something neighbouring,
And went along.

A trifle afterward
A thing occurred,
I'd not believe it if I heard—
But state with creeping blood;
A snake, with mottles rare,
Surveyed my chamber floor,
In feature as the worm before,
But ringed with power.
The very string
With which I tied him, too,
When he was mean and new,
That string was there.

I shrank—"How fair you are!"
Propitiation's claw—

AMERICAN POETRY

"Afraid," he hissed,
"Of me?
No cordiality?"
He fathomed me.

Then to a rhythm slim
Secreted in his form,
As patterns swim,
Projected him.

That time I flew,
Both eyes his way,
Lest he pursue—
Nor ever ceased to run,
Till in a distant town,
Towns on from mine—
I sat me down;
This was a dream.

II

I died for beauty, but was scarce
Adjusted in the tomb,
When one who died for truth was lain
In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth—the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a-night,
We talked between the rooms,
Until the moss had reached our lips,
And covered up our names.

III

I've seen a dying eye
Run round and round a room
In search of something, as it seemed,
Then cloudier become;
And then, obscure with fog,
And then be soldered down,
Without disclosing what it be,
'Twere blessed to have seen.

IV

The Chariot

BECAUSE I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labour, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children played,
Their lessons scarcely done;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling on the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

V

If I shouldn't be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in red cravat
A memorial crumb.

If I couldn't thank you,
Being just asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my granite lip!

VI

Safe in their alabaster chambers,
Untouched by morning and untouched by noon,
Sleep the meek members of the resurrection,
Rafters of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine;
Babbles the bee in a stolid ear;
Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence—
Ah, what sagacity perished here!

Grand go the years in the crescent above them;
Worlds scoop their arcs, and firmaments row,
Diadems drop and Doges surrender,
Soundless as dots on a disk of snow.

VII

The Wind

OF all the sounds despatched abroad,
There's not a charge to me
Like that old measure in the boughs,
That phraseless melody

The wind does, working like a hand
Whose fingers brush the sky,
Then quiver down, with tufts of tune
Permitted gods and me.

When winds go round and round in bands,
And thrum upon the door,
And birds take places overhead,
To bear them orchestra,

I crave him grace, of summer boughs,
If such an outcast be,
He never heard that fleshless chant
Rise solemn in the tree,

As if some caravan of sound
On deserts, in the sky,
Had broken rank,
Then knit, and passed
In seamless company.

VIII

In the Garden

A BIRD came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

IX

The Snake

A NARROW fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides;
You may have met him—did you not,
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen;
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,
A floor too cool for corn.
Yet when a child, and barefoot,
I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun—
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

X

The Storm

THERE came a wind like a bugle;
It quivered through the grass,
And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the windows and the doors
As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away,
And rivers where the houses ran
The living looked that day.
The bell within the steeple wild
The flying tidings whirled.
How much can come
And much can go,
And yet abide the world!

XI

It was not death, for I stood up,
And all the dead lie down;
It was not night, for all the bells
Put out their tongues, for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh
I felt siroccos crawl—
Nor fire, for just my marble feet
Could keep a chancel cool.

AMERICAN POETRY

And yet it tasted like them all;
The figures I have seen
Set orderly for burial,
Reminded me of mine,

As if my life were shaven
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key;
And 'twas like midnight, some,

When everything that ticked has stopped,
And space stares, all around,
Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,
Repeal the beating ground.

But most like chaos—stopless, cool—
Without a chance or spar,
Or even a report of land
To justify despair.

XII

Parting

MY life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive,
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

XIII

To my quick ear the leaves conferred;
The bushes they were bells;

I could not find a privacy
From Nature's sentinels. ✓

In cave if I presumed to hide,
The walls began to tell;
Creation seemed a mighty crack
To make me visible.

XIV

Not any sunny tone
From any fervent zone
Finds entrance there.
Better a grave of Balm
Toward human nature's home,
And Robins near,
Than a stupendous Tomb
Proclaiming to the gloom
How dead we are.

XV

A Snake

SWEET is the swamp with its secrets,
Until we meet a snake;
'Tis then we sigh for houses,
And our departure take
At that enthralling gallop
That only childhood knows,
A snake is summer's treason,
And guile is where it goes.

XVI

I have a king who does not speak;
So, wondering, through the hours meek

AMERICAN POETRY

I trudge the day away—
 Half glad when it is night and sleep,
 If, haply, through a dream to peep
 In parlours shut by day.

And if I do, when morning comes
 It is as if a hundred drums
 Did round my pillow roll,
 And shouts fill all my childish sky,
 And bells keep saying 'victory'
 From steeples in my soul!

And if I don't, the little Bird
 Within the orchard is not heard,
 And I omit to pray,
 'Father, Thy will be done' today,
 For my will goes the other way,
 And it were perjury!

XVII

Evening

THE cricket sang,
 And set the sun,
 And workmen finished, one by one
 Their seam the day upon.

The low grass loaded with the dew,
 The twilight stood as strangers do
 With hat in hand, polite and new,
 To stay as if, or go.

A vastness, as a neighbour, came—
 A wisdom without face or name,
 A peace, as hemispheres at home—
 And so the night became.

XVIII

Aurora

OF bronze and blaze
The north, to-night!
So adequate its forms,
So preconcerted with itself,
So distant to alarms—
An unconcern so sovereign
To universe, or me,
It paints my simple spirit
With tints of majesty,
Till I take vaster attitudes,
And strut upon my stem,
Disdaining men and oxygen,
For arrogance of them.
My splendours are menagerie;
But their competeless show
Will entertain the centuries
When I am, long ago,
An island in dishonoured grass,
Whom none but daisies know.

XIX

Immortality

IT is an honourable thought,
And makes one lift one's hat,
As one encountered gentlefolk
Upon a daily street,

That we've immortal place,
Though pyramids decay,
And kingdoms, like the orchard,
Flit russetly away.

XX

Trying to Forget

BEREAVED of all, I went abroad,
No less bereaved to be
Upon a new peninsula—
The grave preceded me,

Obtained my lodgings ere myself,
And when I sought my bed,
The grave it was, reposed upon
The pillow for my head.

I waked, to find it first awake,
I rose—it followed me;
I tried to drop it in the crowd,
To lose it in the sea,

In cups of artificial drowse
To sleep its shape away—
The grave was finished, but the spade
Remained in memory.

XXI

I felt a funeral in my brain,
And mourners, to and fro,
Kept treading, treading, till it seemed
That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,
A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, till I thought
My mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,
And creak across my soul

With those same boots of lead, again.
Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell,
And Being but an ear,
And I am silence some strange race,
Wrecked, solitary, here.

XXII

Dying

I heard a fly buzz when I died;
The stillness round my form
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the heaves of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,
And breaths were gathering sure
For that last onset, when the king
Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away
What portion of me I
Could make assignable—and then
There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,
Between the light and me;
And then the windows failed, and then
I could not see to see.

XXIII

A clock stopped—not the mantel's;
Geneva's farthest skill
Can't put the puppet bowing
That just now dangled still.

An awe came on the trinket!
 The figures hunched with pain,
 Then quivered out of decimals
 Into degreeless noon.

It will not stir for doctors,
 This pendulum of snow;
 The shopman importunes it,
 While cool, concernless No

Nods from the gilded pointers,
 Nods from the seconds slim,
 Decades of arrogance between
 The dial life and him.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON

Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford

YOU are a friend then, as I make it out,
 Of our man Shakespeare, who alone of us
 Will put an ass's head in Fairyland
 As he would add a shilling to more shillings,
 All most harmonious—and out of his
 Miraculous inviolable increase
 Fills Ilion, Rome, or any town you like
 Of olden time with timeless Englishmen;
 And I must wonder what you think of him—
 All you down there where your small Avon flows
 By Stratford, and where you're an Alderman.
 Some, for a guess, would have him riding back
 To be a farrier there, or say a dyer;
 Or maybe one of your adept surveyors;
 Or like enough the wizard of all tanners.

Not you—no fear of that; for I discern
 In you a kindling of the flame that saves—
 The nimble element, the true caloric;
 I see it, and was told of it, moreover,
 By our discriminate friend himself, no other.
 Had you been one of the sad average,
 As he would have it—meaning, as I take it,
 The sinew and the solvent of our Island,
 You'd not be buying beer for this Terpander's
 Approved and estimated friend Ben Jonson;
 He'd never foist it as a part of his
 Contingent entertainment of a townsman
 While he goes off rehearsing, as he must,
 If he shall ever be the Duke of Stratford.
 And my words are no shadow on your town—
 Far from it; for one town's as like another
 As all are unlike London. Oh, he knows it—
 And there's the Stratford in him; he denies it,
 And there's the Shakespeare in him. So, God help him!
 I tell him he needs Greek; but neither God
 Nor Greek will help him. Nothing will help that man.
 You see the fates have given him so much,
 He must have all or perish—or look out
 Of London, where he sees too many lords.
 They're part of half what ails him: I suppose
 There's nothing fouler down among the demons
 Than what it is he feels when he remembers
 The dust and sweat and ointment of his calling
 With his lords looking on and laughing at him.
 King as he is, he can't be king *de facto*,
 And that's as well, because he wouldn't like it;
 He'd frame a lower rating of men then
 Than he has now; and after that would come
 An abdication or an apoplexy.
 He can't be king, not even king of Stratford—
 Though half the world, if not the whole of it,
 May crown him with a crown that fits no king
 Save Lord Apollo's homesick emissary:
 Not there on Avon, or on any stream

Where Naiads and their white arms are no more
Shall he find home again. It's all too bad.
But there's a comfort, for he'll have that House—
The best you ever saw; and he'll be there
Anon, as you're an Alderman. Good God!
He makes me lie awake o' nights and laugh.

And you have known him from his origin,
You tell me; and a most uncommon urchin
He must have been to the few seeing ones—
A trifle terrifying, I dare say,
Discovering a world with his man's eyes,
Quite as another lad might see some finches,
If he looked hard and had an eye for Nature.
But this one had his eyes and their foretelling,
And he had you to fare with, and what else?
He must have had a father and a mother—
In fact I've heard him say so—and a dog,
As a boy should, I venture; and the dog,
Most likely, was the only man who knew him.
A dog, for all I know, is what he needs
As much as anything right here to-day,
To counsel him about his disillusionings,
Old aches, and parturitions of what's coming—
A dog of orders, an emeritus,
To wag his tail at him when he comes home,
And then to put his paws up on his knees
And say, "For God's sake, what's it all about?"

I don't know whether he needs a dog or not—
Or what he needs. I tell him he needs Greek;
I'll talk of rules and Aristotle with him,
And if his tongue's at home he'll say to that,
"I have your word that Aristotle knows,
And you mine that I don't know Aristotle."
He'll all at odds with all the unities,
And what's yet worse it doesn't seem to matter;
He treads along through Time's old wilderness
As if the tramp of all the centuries

Had left no roads—and there are none, for him;
He doesn't see them, even with those eyes—
And that's a pity, or I say it is.
Accordingly we have him as we have him—
Going his way, the way that he goes best,
A pleasant animal with no great noise
Or nonsense anywhere to set him off—
Save only divers and inclement devils
Have made of late his heart their dwelling-place.
A flame half ready to fly out sometimes
At some annoyance may be fanned up in him,
But soon it falls, and when it falls goes out;
He knows how little room there is in there
For crude and futile animosities,
And how much for the joy of being whole,
And how much for long sorrow and old pain.
On our side there are some who may be given
To grow old wondering what he thinks of us
And some above us, who are, in his eyes,
Above himself—and that's quite right and English.
Yet here we smile, or disappoint the gods
Who made it so; the gods have always eyes
To see men scratch; and they see one down here
Who itches, manor-bitten, to the bone,
Albeit he knows himself—yes, yes, he knows—
The lord of more than England and of more
Than all the seas of England in all time
Shall ever wash. D'y'e wonder that I laugh?
He see me, and he doesn't seem to care;
And why the devil should he? I can't tell you.
I'll meet him out alone of a bright Sunday,
Trim, rather spruce, and quite the gentleman.
“What, ho, my lord!” say I. He doesn't hear me;
Wherefore I have to pause and look at him.
He's not enormous, but one looks at him.
A little on the round if you insist,
For now, God save the mark, he's growing old;
He's five and forty, and to hear him talk
These days you'd call him eighty; then you'd add

More years to that. He's old enough to be
The father of a world, and so he is.
"Ben, you're a scholar, what's the time of day?"
Says he; and there shines out of him again
An aged light that has no age or station—
The mystery that's his—a mischievous
Half-mad serenity that laughs at fame
For being won so easy, and at friends
Who laugh at him for what he wants the most,
And for his dukedom down in Warwickshire;—
By which you see we're all a little jealous. . . .
Poor Greene! I fear the colour of his name
Was even as that of his ascending soul;
And he was one where there are many others—
Some scrivening to the end against their fate,
Their puppets all in ink and all to die there;
And some with hands that once would shade an eye
That scanned Euripides and Æschylus
Will reach by this time for a pot-house mop
To slush their first and last of royalties.
Poor devils! and they all play to his hand;
For so it was in Athens and old Rome.
But that's not here or there; I've wandered off.
Green does it, or I'm careful. Where's that boy?

Yes, he'll go back to Stratford. And we'll miss him?
Dear sir, there'll be no London here without him.
We'll all be riding, one of these fine days,
Down there to see him—and his wife won't like us;
And then we'll think of what he never said
Of women—which, if taken all in all
With what he did say, would buy many horses.
Though nowadays he's not so much for women:
"So few of them," he says, "are worth the guessing."
But there's a worm at work when he says that,
And while he says it one feels in the air
A deal of circumambient hocus-pocus.
They've had him, dancing till his toes were tender,
And he can feel 'em now, come chilly rains.

There's no long cry for going into it,
 However, and we don't know much about it.
 But you in Stratford, like most here in London.
 Have more now in the *Sonnets* than you paid for;
 He's put one there with all her poison on,
 To make a singing fiction of a shadow
 That's in his life a fact, and always will be.
 But she's no care of ours, though Time, I fear,
 Will have a more reverberant ado
 About her than about another one
 Who seems to have decoyed him, married him,
 And sent him scuttling on his way to London—
 With much already learned, and more to learn,
 And more to follow. Lord! how I see him now,
 Pretending, maybe trying, to be like us.
 Whatever he may have meant, we never had him;
 He failed us, or escaped, or what you will—
 And there was that about him (God knows what—
 We'd flayed another had he tried it on us)
 That made as many of us as had wits
 More fond of all his easy distances
 Than one another's noise and clap-your-shoulder.
 But think you not, my friend, he'd never talk!
 Talk? He was eldritch at it; and we listened—
 Thereby acquiring much we knew before
 About ourselves, and hitherto had held
 Irrelevant, or not prime to the purpose.
 And there were some, of course, and there be now,
 Disordered and reduced amazedly
 To resignation by the mystic seal
 Of young finality the gods had laid
 On everything that made him a young demon;
 And one or two shot looks at him already
 As he had been their executioner;
 And once or twice he was, not knowing it—
 Or knowing, being sorry for poor clay
 And saying nothing . . . Yet, for all his engines,
 You'll meet a thousand of an afternoon
 Who strut and sun themselves and see around 'em

A world made out of more that has a reason
Than his, I swear, that he sees here to-day;
Though he may scarcely give a Fool an exit
But we mark how he sees in everything
A law that, given that we flout it once too often,
Brings fire and iron down on our naked heads.
To me it looks as if the power that made him,
For fear of giving all things to one creature,
Left out the first—faith, innocence, illusion,
Whatever 'tis that keeps us out o' Bedlam—
And thereby, for his too consuming vision,
Empowered him out of nature; though to see him,
You'd never guess what's going on inside him.
He'll break out some day like a keg of ale
With too much independent frenzy in it;
And all for cellaring what he knows won't keep,
And what he'd best forget—but that he can't.
You'll have it, and have more than I'm foretelling;
And there'll be such a roaring at the Globe
As never stunned the bleeding gladiators.
He'll have to change the colour of its hair
A bit, for now he calls it Cleopatra.
Black hair would never do for Cleopatra.
But you and I are not yet two old women,
And you're a man of office. What he does
Is more to you than how it is he does it—
And that's what the Lord God has never told him.
They work together, and the Devil helps 'em;
They do it of a morning, or if not,
They do it of a night; in which event
He's peevish of a morning. He seems old;
He's not the proper stomach or the sleep—
And they're two sovran agents to conserve him
Against the fiery art that has no mercy
But what's in that prodigious grand new House.
I gather something happening in his boyhood
Fulfilled him with a boy's determination
To make all Stratford 'ware of him. Well, well,
I hope at last he'll have his joy of it,

And all his pigs and sheep and bellowing bees,
And frogs and owls and unicorns, moreover,
Be less than hell to his attendant ears.
Oh, past a doubt we'll all go down to see him.

He may be wise. With London two days off,
Down there some wind of heaven may yet revive him;
But there's no quickening breath from anywhere
Shall make of him again the young poised faun
From Warwickshire, who'd made, it seems, already
A legend of himself before I came
To blink before the last of his first lightning.
Whatever there be, there'll be no more of that;
The coming on of his old monster Time
Has made him a still man; and he has dreams
Were fair to think on once, and all found hollow.
He knows how much of what men paint themselves
Would blister in the light of what they are;
He sees how much of what was great now shares
An eminence transformed and ordinary;
He knows too much of what the world has hushed
In others, to be loud now for himself;
He knows now at what height low enemies
May reach his heart, and high friends let him fall;
But what not even such as he may know
Bedevils him the worst: his lark may sing
At heaven's gate how he will, and for as long
As joy may listen, but *he* sees no gate,
Save one whereat the spent clay waits a little
Before the churchyard has it, and the worm.
Not long ago, late in an afternoon,
I came on him unseen down Lambeth way,
And on my life I was afraid of him:
He gloomed and mumbled like a soul from Tophet,
His hands behind him and his head bent solemn.
"What is it now," said I, "another woman?"
That made him sorry for me, and he smiled.
"No, Ben," he mused; "it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;

Spiders and flies—we're mostly one or t'other—
We come, we go; and when we're done, we're done;"

"By God, you sing that song as if you knew it!"
Said I, by way of cheering him; "what ails ye?"
"I think I must have come down here to think,"
Says he to that, and pulls his little beard;
"Your fly will serve as well as anybody,
And what's his hour? He flies, and flies, and flies,
And in his fly's mind has a brave appearance;
And then your spider gets him in her net,
And eats him out, and hangs him up to dry.
That's Nature, the kind mother of us all.
And then your slattern housemaid swings her broom,
And where's your spider? And that's Nature, also.
It's Nature, and it's Nothing. It's all Nothing.
It's all a world where bugs and emperors
Go singularly back to the same dust,
Each in his time; and the old, ordered stars
That sang together, Ben, will sing the same
Old stave to-morrow."

When he talks like that,
There's nothing for a human man to do
But lead him to some grateful nook like this
Where we be now, and there to make him drink.
He'll drink, for love of me, and then be sick;
A sad sign always in a man of parts,
And always very ominous. The great
Should be as large in liquor as in love—
And our great friend is not so large in either:
One disaffects him, and the other fails him;
Whatso he drinks that has an antic in it,
He's wondering what's to pay in his insides;
And while his eyes are on the Cyprian
He's fribbling all the time wit' that damned House.
We laugh here at his thrift, but after all
It may be thrift that saves him from the devil;
God gave it, anyhow—and we'll suppose
He knew the compound of His handiwork.

To-day the clouds are with him, but anon
He'll out of 'em enough to shake the tree
Of life itself and bring down fruit unheard-of—
And, throwing in the bruised and whole together,
Prepare a wine to make us drunk with wonder;
And if he live, there'll be a sunset spell
Thrown over him as over a glassed lake
That yesterday was all a black wild water.

God send he live to give us, if no more,
What now's a-rampage in him, and exhibit,
With a decent half-allegiance to the ages
An earnest of at least a casual eye
Turned once on what he owes to Gutenberg,
And to the fealty of more centuries
Than are as yet a picture in our vision.
"There's time enough—I'll do it when I'm old,
And we're immortal men," he says to that;
And then he says to me, "Ben, what's 'immortal'?
Think you by any force of ordination
It may be nothing of a sort more noisy
Than a small oblivion of component ashes
That of a dream-addicted world was once
A moving atomy much like your friend here?"
Nothing will help that man. To make him laugh,
I said then he was a mad mountebank—
And by the Lord I nearer made him cry.
I could have eat an eft then, on my knees,
Tails, claws, and all of him; for I had stung
The king of men, who had no sting for me,
And I had hurt him in his memories;
And I say now, as I shall say again,
I love the man this side idolatry.
He'll do it when he's old, he says. I wonder.
He may not be so ancient as all that.
For such as he the thing that is to do
Will do itself—but there's a reckoning;
The sessions that are now too much his own,
The roiling inward of a still outside,

The churning out of all those blood-fed lines,
The nights of many schemes and little sleep,
The full brain hammered hot with too much thinking,
The vexed heart over-worn with too much aching—
This weary jangling of conjoined affairs
Made out of elements that have no end,
And all confused at once, I understand,
Is not what makes a man to live forever.
O, no, not now! He'll not be going now:
There'll be time yet for God knows what explosions
Before he goes. He'll stay awhile. Just wait:
Just wait a year or two for Cleopatra,
For she's to be a balsam and a comfort;
And that's not all a jape of mine now, either.
For granted once the old way of Apollo
Sings in a man, he may then, if he's able,
Strike unafraid whatever strings he will
Upon the last and wildest of new lyres;
Nor out of his new magic, though it hymn
The shrieks of dungeoned hell, shall he create
A madness or a gloom to shut quite out
A cleaving daylight, and a last great calm
Triumphant over shipwreck and all storms.
He might have given Aristotle creeps,
But surely would have given him his *katharsis*.
He'll not be going yet. There's too much yet
Unsung within the man. But when he goes,
I'd stake ye coin o' the realm his only care
For a phantom world he sounded and found wanting
Will be a portion here, a portion there,
Of this or that thing or some other thing
That has a patent and intrinsic
Equivalence in those egregious shillings.
And yet he knows, God help him! Tell me, now,
If ever there was anything let loose
On earth by gods or devils heretofore
Like this mad, careful, proud, indifferent Shakespeare!
Where was it, if it ever was? By heaven,
'Twas never yet in Rhodes or Pergamon—

In Thebes or Nineveh, a thing like this!
No thing like this was ever out of England;
And that he knows. I wonder if he cares.
Perhaps he does. . . . O Lord, that House in Stratford!

Eros Turannos

SHE fears him, and will always ask
What fated her to choose him;
She meets in his engaging mask
All reasons to refuse him;
But what she meets and what she fears
Are less than are the downward years,
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity
That once had power to sound him,
And Love, that will not let him be
The Judas that she found him,
Her pride assuages her almost,
As if it were alone the cost.—
He sees that he will not be lost,
And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees
Envelops and allures him;
Tradition, touching all he sees,
Beguiles and reassures him;
And all her doubts of what he says
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—
Till even prejudice delays
And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates
The reign of her confusion;
The pounding wave reverberates
The dirge of her illusion;

And home, where passion lived and died,
 Becomes a place where she can hide,
 While all the town and harbour side
 Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,
 The story as it should be—
 As if the story of a house
 Were told, or ever could be;
 We'll have no kindly veil between
 Her visions and those we have seen—
 As if we guessed what hers have been,
 Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they
 That with a god have striven,
 Not hearing much of what we say,
 Take what the god has given;
 Though like waves breaking it may be,
 Or like a changed familiar tree,
 Or like a stairway to the sea
 Where down the blind are driven.

The Gift of God

BLESSED with a joy that only she
 Of all alive shall ever know,
 She wears a proud humility
 For what it was that willed it so—
 That her degree should be so great
 Among the favoured of the Lord
 That she may scarcely bear the weight
 Of her bewildering reward.

As one apart, immune, alone,
 Or featured for the shining ones,
 And like to none that she has known
 Of other women's other sons—

The firm fruition of her need,
He shines anointed; and he blurs
Her vision, till it seems indeed
A sacrilege to call him hers.

She fears a little for so much
Of what is best, and hardly dares
To think of him as one to touch
With aches, indignities, and cares;
She sees him rather at the goal,
Still shining; and her dream foretells
The proper shining of a soul
Where nothing ordinary dwells.

Perchance a canvass of the town
Would find him far from flags and shouts,
And leave him only the renown
Of many smiles and many doubts;
Perchance the crude and common tongue
Would havoc strangely with his worth;
But she, with innocence unwrung,
Would read his name around the earth.

And others, knowing how this youth
Would shine, if love could make him great,
When caught and tortured for the truth
Would only writhe and hesitate;
While she, arranging for his days
What centuries could not fulfil,
Transmutes him with her faith and praise,
And has him shining where she will.

She crowns him with her gratefulness,
And says again that life is good;
And should the gift of God be less
In him than in her motherhood,
His fame, though vague, will not be small,
As upward through her dream he fares,
Half clouded with a crimson fall
Of roses thrown on marble stairs.

For a Dead Lady

NO more with overflowing light
Shall fill the eyes that now are faded,
Nor shall another's fringe with night
Their woman-hidden world as they did.
No more shall quiver down the days
The flowing wonder of her ways,
Whereof no language may requite
The shifting and the many-shaded.

The grace, divine, definitive,
Clings only as a faint forestalling;
The laugh that love could not forgive
Is hushed, and answers to no calling;
The forehead and the little ears
Have gone where Saturn keeps the years;
The breast where roses could not live
Has done with rising and with falling.

The beauty, shattered by the laws
That have creation in their keeping,
No longer trembles at applause,
Or over children that are sleeping;
And we who delve in beauty's lore
Know all that we have known before
Of what inexorable cause
Makes Time so vicious in his reaping.

The Man Against the Sky

BETWEEN me and the sunset, like a dome
Against the glory of a world on fire,
Now burned a sudden hill,
Bleak, round, and high, by flame-lit height made higher,
With nothing on it for the flame to kill

Save one who moved and was alone up there
To loom before the chaos and the glare
As if he were the last god going home
Unto his last desire.
Dark, marvellous, and inscrutable he moved on
Till down the fiery distance he was gone,
Like one of those eternal, remote things
That range across a man's imaginings
When a sure music fills him and he knows
What he may say thereafter to few men—
The touch of ages having wrought
An echo and a glimpse of what he thought
A phantom or a legend until then;
For whether lighted over ways that save,
Or lured from all repose,
If he go on too far to find a grave,
Mostly alone he goes.
Even he, who stood where I had found him,
On high with fire all round him,
Who moved along the molten west,
And over the round hill's crest
That seemed half ready with him to go down,
Flame-bitten and flame-cleft,
As if there were to be no last thing left
Of a nameless unimaginable town—
Even he who climbed and vanished may have taken
Down to the perils of a depth not known,
From death defended, though by men forsaken,
The bread that every man must eat alone;
He may have walked while others hardly dared
Look on to see him stand where many fell;
And upward out of that as out of hell,
He may have sung and striven
To mount where more of him shall yet be given,
Bereft of all retreat,
To sevenfold heat—
As on a day when three in Dura shared
The furnace, and were spared
For glory by that king of Babylon

Who made himself so great that God, who heard,
Covered him with long feathers, like a bird.
Again, he may have gone down easily,
By comfortable altitudes, and found,
As always, underneath him solid ground
Whereon to be sufficient and to stand
Possessed already of the promised land,
Far stretched and fair to see:

A good sight, verily,
And one to make the eyes of her who bore him
Shine glad with hidden tears.

Why question of his ease of who before him,
In one place or another where they left
Their names as far behind them as their bones,
And yet by dint of slaughter, toil, and theft,
And shrewdly sharpened stones,
Carved hard the way for his ascendancy
Through deserts of lost years?

Why trouble him now who sees and hears
No more than what his innocence requires,
And therefore to no other height aspires
Than one at which he neither quails nor tires?
He may do more by seeing what he sees
Than others eager for iniquities;
He may, by seeing all things for the best,
Incite futurity to do the rest.

Or with an even likelihood,
He may have met with atrabilious eyes
The fires of time on equal terms and passed
Indifferently down, until at last
His only kind of grandeur would have been,
Apparently, in being seen.

He may have had for evil or for good
No argument; he may have had no care
For what without himself went anywhere
To failure or to glory, and least of all
For such a stale, flamboyant miracle;
He may have been the prophet of an art
Immovable to old idolatries;

He may have been a player without a part,
Annoyed that even the sun should have the skies
For such a flaming way to advertise;
He may have been a painter sick at heart
With Nature's toiling for a new surprise;
He may have been a cynic, who now, for all
Of anything divine that his effete
Negation may have tasted,
Saw truth in his own image, rather small,
Forbore to fever the ephemeral,
Found any barren height a good retreat
From any swarming street,
And in the sun saw power superbly wasted;
And when the primitive old-fashioned stars
Came out again to shine on joys and wars
More primitive, and all arrayed for doom,
He may have proved a world a sorry thing
In his imagining,
And life a lighted highway to the tomb.
Or, mounting with unfirm unsearching tread,
His hopes to chaos led,
He may have stumbled up there from the past,
And with an aching strangeness viewed the last
Abysmal conflagration of his dreams—
A flame where nothing seems
To burn but flame itself, by nothing fed;
And while it all went out,
Not even the faint anodyne of doubt
May then have eased a painful going down
From pictured heights of power and lost renown,
Revealed at length to his outlived endeavour
Remote and unapproachable forever;
And at his heart there may have gnawed
Sick memories of a dead faith foiled and flawed
And long dishonoured by the living death
Assigned alike by chance
To brutes and hierophants;
And anguish fallen on those he loved around him
May once have dealt the last blow to confound him,

And so have left him as death leaves a child,
Who sees it all too near;
And he who knows no young way to forget
May struggle to the tomb unreconciled.
Whatever suns may rise and set
There may be nothing kinder for him here
Than shafts and agonies;
And under these
He may cry out and stay on horribly;
Or, seeing in death too small a thing to fear,
He may go forward like a stoic Roman
Where pangs and terrors in his pathway lie—
Or, seizing the swift logic of a woman,
Curse God and die.

Or maybe there, like many another one
Who might have stood aloft and looked ahead,
Black-drawn against wild red,
He may have built unawed by fiery gules
That in him no commotion stirred,
A living reason out of molecules
Why molecules occurred,
And one for smiling when he might have sighed
Had he seen far enough,
And in the same inevitable stuff
Discovered an odd reason too for pride
In being what he must have been by laws
Infrangible and for no kind of cause.
Deterred by no confusion or surprise
He may have seen with his mechanic eyes
A world without a meaning, and had room,
Alone amid magnificence and doom,
To build himself an airy monument
That should, or fail him in his vague intent,
Outlast an accidental universe—
To call it nothing worse—
Or, by the burrowing guile
Of Time disintegrated and effaced,
Like once-remembered mighty trees go down

To ruin, of which by man may now be traced
No part sufficient even to be rotten,
And in the book of things that are forgotten
Is entered as a thing not quite worth while.
He may have been so great
That satraps would have shivered at his frown,
And all he prized alive may rule a state
No larger than a grave that holds a clown;
He may have been a master of his fate,
And of his atoms—ready as another
In his emergence to exonerate
His father and his mother;
He may have been a captain of a host,
Self-cloquent and ripe for prodigies,
Doomed here to swell by dangerous degrees,
And then give up the ghost.
Nahum's great grasshoppers were such as these,
Sun scattered and soon lost.

Whatever the dark road he may have taken,
This man who stood on high
And faced alone the sky,
Whatever drove or lured or guided him—
A vision answering a faith unshaken,
An easy trust assumed by easy denials,
A sick negation born of weak denials,
A crazed abhorrence of an old condition,
A blind attendance on a brief ambition—
Whatever stayed him or derided him,
His way was even as ours;
And we, with all our wounds and all our powers,
Must each await alone at his own height
Another darkness or another light;
And there, of our poor self dominion refit,
If inference and reason shun
Hell, Heaven, and Oblivion,
May thwarted will (perforce precarious,
But for our conservation better thus)
Have no misgivings left

Of doing yet what here we leave undone?
Or if unto the last of these we cleave,
Believing or protesting we believe
In such an idle and ephemeral
Florescence of the diabolical—
If, robbed of two fond old enormities,
Our being had no onward auguries,
What then were this great love of ours to say
For launching other lives to voyage again
A little farther into time and pain,
A little faster in a futile chase
For a kingdom and a power and a Race
That would have still in sight
A manifest end of ashes and eternal night?
Is this the music of the toys we shake
So loud—as if there might be no mistake
Somewhere in our indomitable will?
Are we no greater than the noise we make
Along our blind atomic pilgrimage
Whereon by crass chance billeted we go
Because our brains and bones and cartilage
Will have it so?
If this we say, then let us all be still
About our share in it, and live and die
More quietly thereby.

Where was he going, this man against the sky?
You know not, nor do I.
But this we know, if we know anything:
That we may laugh and fight and sing
And of our transience here make offering
To an orient Word that will not be erased,
Or, save in incommunicable gleams
Too permanent for dreams,
Be found or known.
No tonic or ambitious irritant
Of increase or of want
Has made an otherwise insensate waste
Of ages overthrown

A ruthless, veiled, implacable foretaste
Of other ages that are still to be
Depleted and rewarded variously
Because a few, by fate's economy,
Shall seem to move the world the way it goes;
No soft evangel of equality,
Safe-cradled in a communal repose
That huddles into death and may at last
Be covered well with equatorial snows—
And all for what, the devil only knows—
Will aggregate an inkling to confirm
The credit of a sage or of a worm,
Or tell us why one man in five
Should have a care to stay alive
While in his heart he feels no violence
Laid on his humour and intelligence
When infant Science makes a pleasant face
And waves again that hollow toy, the Race;
No planetary trap where souls are wrought
For nothing but the sake of being caught
And sent again to nothing will attune
Itself to any key of any reason
Why man should hunger through another season
To find out why 'twere better late than soon
To go away and let the sun and moon
And all the silly stars illuminate
A place for creeping things,
And those that root and trumpet and have wings,
And herd and ruminates,
Or dive and flash and poise in rivers and seas,
Or by their loyal tails in lofty trees
Hang screeching lewd victorious derision
Of man's immortal vision.
Shall we, because Eternity records
Too vast an answer for the time-born words
We spell, whereof so many are dead that once
In our capricious lexicons
Were so alive and final, hear no more
The Word itself, the living word

That none alive has ever heard
Or ever spelt,
And few have ever felt
Without the fears and old surrenderings
And terrors that began
When Death let fall a feather from his wings
And humbled the first man?
Because the weight of our humility,
Wherefrom we gain
A little wisdom and much pain,
Falls here too sore and there too tedious,
Are we in anguish or complacency,
Not looking far enough ahead
To see by what mad couriers we are led
Along the roads of the ridiculous,
To pity ourselves and laugh at faith
And while we curse life bear it?
And if we see the soul's dead end in death,
Are we to fear it?
What folly is here that has not yet a name
Unless we say outright that we are liars?
What have we seen beyond our sunset fires
That lights again the way by which we came?
Why pay we such a price, and one we give
So clamouringly, for each racked empty day
That leads one more last human hope away,
As quiet fiends would lead past our crazed eyes
Our children to an unseen sacrifice?
If after all that we have lived and thought,
All comes to Nought—
If there be nothing after Now,
And we be nothing anyhow,
And we know that—why live?
'Twere sure but weaklings' vain distress
To suffer dungeons where so many doors
Will open on the cold eternal shores
That look sheer down
To the dark tideless floods of Nothingness
Where all who know may drown.

ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH

The Monk in the Kitchen

I

ORDER is a lovely thing;
On disarray it lays its wing,
Teaching simplicity to sing.
It has a meek and lowly grace,
Quiet as a nun's face.
Lo—I will have thee in this place!
Tranquil well of deep delight,
All things that shine through thee appear
As stones through water, sweetly clear.
Thou clarity,
That with angelic charity
Revealest beauty where thou art,
Spread thyself like a clean pool,
Then all the things that in thee are,
Shall seem: more spiritual and fair,
Reflection from serener air—
Sunken shapes of many a star
In the high heavens set afar.

II

Ye stolid, homely, visible things,
Above you all brood glorious wings
Of your deep entities, set high,
Like slow moons in a hidden sky.
But you, their likenesses, are spent
Upon another element.

Truly ye are but seemings—
The shadowy cast-off gleamings
Of bright solidities. Ye seem
Soft as water, vague as dream;
Image, cast in a shifting stream.

III

What are ye?
I know not.
Brazen pan and iron pot,
Yellow brick and gray flag-stone
That my feet have trod upon—
Ye seem to me
Vessels of bright mystery.
For ye do bear a shape, and so
Though ye were made by man, I know
An inner Spirit also made,
And ye his breathings have obeyed.

IV

Shape, the strong and awful spirit,
Laid his ancient hand on you.
He waste chaos doth inherit;
He can alter and subdue.
Verily, he doth lift up
Matter, like a sacred cup.
Into deep substance he reached, and io
Where ye were not, ye were; and so
Out of useless nothing, ye
Groaned and laughed and came to be.
And I use you, as I can,
Wonderful uses, made for man,
Iron pot and brazen pan.

V

What are ye?
I know not;
Nor what I really do
When I move and govern you.
There is no small work unto God.
He required of us greatness;
Of His least creature
A high angelic nature,
Stature superb and bright completeness,
He sets to us no humble duty.
Each act that He would have us do
Is haloed round with strangest beauty;
Terrific deeds and cosmic tasks
Of His plainest child He asks.
When I polish the brazen pan
I hear a creature laugh afar
In the gardens of a star,
And from his burning presence run
Flaming wheels of many a sun.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
When I cleanse this earthen floor
My spirit leaps to see
Bright garments trailing over it,
A cleanness made by me.
Purger of all men's thoughts and ways,
With labour do I sound Thy praise,
My work is done for Thee.
Whoever makes a thing more bright,
He is an angel of all light.
Therefore let me spread abroad
The beautiful cleanness of my God.

VI

One time in the cool of dawn
Angels came and worked with me.

The air was soft with many a wing.
 They laughed amid my solitude
 And cast bright looks on everything.
 Sweetly of me did they ask
 That they might do my common task.
 And all were beautiful—but One
 With garments whiter than the sun
 Had such a face
 Of deep, remembered grace;
 That when I saw I cried—"Thou art
 The great Blood-Brother of my heart.
 Where have I seen Thee?"—And He said,
 "When we are dancing round God's throne,
 How often thou art there.
 Beauties from thy hands have flown
 Like white doves wheeling in mid air.
 Nay—thy soul remembers not?
 Work on, and cleanse thy iron pot."

VII

What are we? I know not.

GEORGE SANTAYANA

Solipsism

I COULD believe that I am here alone,
 And all the world my dream;
 The passion of the scene is all my own,
 And things that seem but seem.

Perchance an exhalation of my sorrow
 Hath raised this vaporous show,

For whence but from my soul should all things borrow
So deep a tinge of woe?

I keep the secret doubt within my breast
To be the gods' defence,
To ease the heart by too much ruth oppressed
And drive the horror hence.

O sorrow that the patient brute should cower
And die, not having sinned!
O pity that the wild and fragile flower
Should shiver in the wind!

Then were I dreaming dreams I know not of,
For that is part of me
That feels the piercing pang of grief and love
And doubts eternally.

But whether all to me the vision come
Or break in many beams,
The pageant ever shifts, and being's sum
Is but the sum of dreams.

Odes

I

WHAT god will choose me from this labouring nation
To worship him afar, with inward gladness,
At sunset and at sunrise, in some Persian
Garden of roses;

Or under the full moon, in rapturous silence,
Charmed by the trickling fountain, and the moaning
Of the death-hallowed cypress, and the myrtle
Hallowed by Venus?

O for a chamber in an eastern tower,
Spacious and empty, roofed in odorous cedar,
A silken soft divan, a woven carpet
 Rich, many-coloured;

A jug that, poised on her firm head, a Negress
Fetched from the well; a window to the ocean,
Lest of the stormy world too deep seclusion
 Make me forgetful!

Thence I might watch the vessel-bearing waters
Beat the slow pulses of the life eternal,
Bringing of nature's universal travail
 Infinite echoes;

And there at even I might stand and listen
To thrum of distant lutes and dying voices
Chanting the ditty an Arabian captive
 Sang to Darius.

So would I dream awhile, and ease a little
The soul long stifled and the straitened spirit,
Tasting new pleasures in a far-off country
 Sacred to beauty.

II

My heart rebels against my generation,
That talks of freedom and is slave to riches,
And, toiling 'neath each day's ignoble burden,
 Boasts of the morrow.

No space for noonday rest or midnight watches,
No purest joy of breathing under heaven!
Wretched themselves, they heap, to make them happy,
 Many possessions.

But thou, O silent Mother, wise, immortal,
To whom our toil is laughter,—take, divine one,

This vanity away, and to thy lover
Give what is needful:—

III

Gathering the echoes of forgotten wisdom,
And mastered by a proud, adventurous purpose,
Columbus sought the golden shores of India
Opposite Europe.

He gave the world another world, and ruin
Brought upon blameless, river-loving nations,
Cursed Spain with barren gold, and made the Andes
Fiefs of Saint Peter;

While in the cheerless North the thrifty Saxon
Planted his corn, and, narrowing his bosom,
Made covenant with God, and by keen virtue
Trebled his riches.

What venture hast thou left us, bold Columbus?
What honour left thy brothers, brave Magellan?
Daily the children of the rich for pastime
Circle the planet.

And what good comes to us of all your dangers?
A smaller earth and smaller hope of heaven.
Ye have but cheapened gold, and, measuring ocean,
Counted the islands.

No Ponce de Leon shall drink in fountains,
On any flowering Easter, youth eternal;
No Cortes look upon another ocean;
No Alexander

Found in the Orient dim a boundless kingdom,
And, clothing his Greek strength with barbarous splendour,
Build by the sea his throne, while Sacred Egypt
Honours his godhead.

The earth, the mother once of godlike Theseus
And mighty Heracles, at length is weary,
And now brings forth a spawn of antlike creatures,
 Blackening her valleys,

Inglorious in their birth and in their living,
Curious and querulous, afraid of battle,
Rummaging earth for coals, in camps of hovels
 Crouching from winter,

As if grim fate, amid our boastful prating,
Made us the image of our brutish fathers,
When from their caves they issued, crazed with terror,
 Howling and hungry.

For all things come about in sacred cycles,
And life brings death, and light eternal darkness,
And now the world grows old apace; its glory
 Passes for ever.

Perchance the earth will yet for many ages
Bear her dead child, her moon, around her orbit;
Strange craft may tempt the ocean streams, new forests
 Cover the mountains.

If in those latter days men still remember
Our wisdom and our travail and our sorrow,
They never can be happy, with that burden
 Heavy upon them,

Knowing the hideous past, the blood, the famine,
The ancestral hate, the eager faith's disaster,
All ending in their little lives, and vulgar
 Circle of troubles.

But if they have forgot us, and the shifting
Of sands has buried deep our thousand cities,
Fell superstition then will seize upon them;
 Protean error,

Will fill their panting heart with sickly phantoms
Of sudden blinding good and monstrous evil;
There will be miracles again, and torment,
Dungeon and fagot,—

Until the patient earth, made dry and barren,
Sheds all her herbage in a final winter,
And the gods turn their eyes to some far distant
Bright constellation.

IV

Slowly the black earth gains upon the yellow,
And the caked hill-side is ribbed soft with furrows.
Turn now again, with voice and staff, my ploughman,
Guiding thy oxen.

Lift the great ploughshare, clear the stones and brambles,
Plant it the deeper, with thy foot upon it,
Uprooting all the flowering weeds that bring not
Food to thy children.

Patience is good for man and beast, and labour
Hardens to sorrow and the frost of winter,
Turn then, again, in the brave hope of harvest,
Singing to heaven.

V

Of thee the Northman by his beachèd galley
Dreamt, as he watched the never-setting Ursa
And longed for summer and thy light, O sacred
Mediterranean.

Unseen he loved thee; for the heart within him
Knew earth had gardens where he might be blessed,
Putting away long dreams and aimless, barbarous
Hunger for battle.

The foretaste of thy languors thawed his bosom;
A great need drove him to thy caverned islands
From the gray, endless reaches of the outer
Desert of Ocean.

He saw thy pillars, saw thy sudden mountains
Wrinkled and stark, and in their crooked gorges,
'Neath peeping pine and cypress, guessed the torrent
Smothered in flowers.

Thine incense to the sun, thy gathered vapours,
He saw suspended on the flanks of Taurus,
Or veiling the snowed bosom of the virgin
Sister of Atlas.

He saw the luminous top of wide Olympus,
Fit for the happy gods; he saw the pilgrim
River, with rains of Ethiopia flooding
Populous Egypt.

'And having seen, he loved thee. His racked spirit,
By thy breath tempered and the light that clothes thee,
Forgot the monstrous gods, and made of Nature
Mistress and mother.

The more should I, O fatal sea, before thee
Of alien words make echoes to thy music;
For I was born where first the rills of Tagus
Turn to the westward.

And wandering long, alas! have need of drinking
Deep of the patience of thy perfect sadness,
O thou that constant through the change of ages,
Beautiful ever,

Never wast wholly young and void of sorrows,
Nor ever canst be old, while yet the morning
Kindles thy ripples, or the golden evening
Dyes thee in purple.

Thee, willing to be tamed but still untamable,
The Roman called his own until he perished,
As now the busy English hover o'er thee,
Stalwart and noble;

But all is naught to thee, while no harsh winter
Congeals thy fountains, and the blown Sahara
Chokes not with dreadful sand thy deep and placid
Rock-guarded havens.

Thou carest not what men may tread thy margin;
Nor I, while from some heather-scented headland
I may behold thy beauty, the eternal
Solace of mortals.

TRUMBULL STICKNEY

Be Still. The Hanging Gardens Were a Dream

BE still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream
That over Persian roses flew to kiss
The curlèd lashes of Semiramis.
Troy never was, nor green Skamander stream.
Provence and Troubadour are merest lies,
The glorious hair of Venice was a beam
Made within Titian's eye. The sunsets seem,
The world is very old and nothing is.
Be still. Thou foolish thing, thou canst not wake,
Nor thy tears wedge thy soldered lids apart,
But patter in the darkness of thy heart.
Thy brain is plagued. Thou art a frightened owl
Blind with the light of life thou'ldst not forsake,
And error loves and nourishes thy soul.

Live Blindly

LIVE blindly and upon the hour. The Lord,
Who was the Future, died full long ago.
Knowledge which is the Past is folly. Go,
Poor child, and be not to thyself abhorred.
Around thine earth sun-wingèd winds do blow
And planets roll; a meteor draws his sword;
The rainbow breaks his seven-coloured chord
And the long strips of river-silver flow:
Awake! Give thyself to the lovely hours.
Drinking their lips, catch thou the dream in flight
About their fragile hairs' aërial gold.
Thou art divine, thou livest,—as of old
Apollo springing naked to the light,
And all his island shivered into flowers.

He Said: "If in His Image I Was Made"

HE said: "If in his image I was made,
I am his equal and across the land
We two should make our journey hand in hand
Like brothers dignified and unafraid."
And God that day was walking in the shade.
To whom he said: "The world is idly planned,
We cross each other, let us understand
Thou who thou art, I who I am," he said.
Darkness came down. And all that night was heard
Tremendous clamour and the broken roar
Of things in turmoil driven down before.
Then silence. Morning broke, and sang a bird.
He lay upon the earth, his bosom stirred;
But God was seen no longer any more.

On Some Shells Found Inland

THESE are my murmur-laden shells that keep
A fresh voice tho' the years lie very gray.
The wave that washed their lips and tuned their lay
Is gone, gone with the faded ocean sweep,
The royal tide, gray ebb and sunken neap
And purple midday,—gone! To this hot clay
Must sing my shells, where yet the primal day,
Its roar and rhythm and splendour will not sleep.
What hand shall join them to their proper sea
If all be gone? Shall they forever feel
Glories undone and worlds that cannot be?—
'T were mercy to stamp out this agèd wrong,
Dash them to earth and crunch them with the heel
And make a dust of their seraphic song.

In Ampezzo

ONLY once more and not again—the larches
Shake to the wind their echo, "Not again,"—
We see, below the sky that over-arches
Heavy and blue, the plain

Between Tofana lying and Cristallo
In meadowy earths above the ringing stream:
Whence interchangeably desire may follow,
Hesitant as in dream,

At sunset, south, by lilac promontories
Under green skies to Italy, or forth
By calms of morning beyond Lavinores
Tyrolward and to north:

As now, this last of latter days, when over
The brownish field by peasants are undone
Some widths of grass, some plots of mountain clover
Under the autumn sun,

With honey-warm perfume that risen lingers
In mazes of low heat, or takes the air,
Passing delicious as a woman's fingers
Passing amid the hair;

When scythes are swishing and the mower's muscle
Spans a repeated crescent to and fro,
Or in dry stalks of corn the sickles rustle,
Tangle, detach and go,

Far thro' the wide blue day and greening meadow
Whose blots of amber beaded are with sheaves,
Whereover pallidly a cloud-shadow
Deadens the earth and leaves:

Whilst high around and near, their heads of iron
Sunken in sky whose azure overlights
Ravine and edges, stand the gray and maron
Desolate Dolomites,—

And older than decay from the small summit
Unfolds a stream of pebbly wreckage down
Under the suns of midday, like some comet
Struck into gravel stone.

Faintly across this gold and amethystine
September, images of summer fade;
And gentle dreams now freshen on the pristine
Viols, awhile unplayed,

Of many a place where lovingly we wander,
More dearly held that quickly we forsake,—
A pine by sullen coasts, an oleander
Reddening on the lake.

And there, each year with more familiar motion,
From many a bird and windy forestries,
Or along shaking fringes of the ocean
Vapours of music rise.

From many easts the morning gives her splendour;
The shadows fill with colours we forget;
Remembered tints at evening grow tender,
Tarnished with violet.

Let us away! soon sheets of winter metal
On this discoloured mountain-land will close,
While elsewhere Spring-time weaves a crimson petal,
Builds and perfumes a rose.

Away! for here the mountain sinks in gravel.
Let us forget the unhappy site with change,
And go, if only happiness be travel
After the new and strange:—

Unless 'twere better to be very single,
To follow some diviner monotone,
And in all beauties, where ourselves commingle,
Love but a love, but one,

Across this shadowy minute of our living,
What time our hearts so magically sing,
To mitigate our fever, simply giving
All in a little thing?

Just as here, past yon dumb and melancholy
Sameness of ruin, while the mountains ail,
Summer and sunset-coloured autumn slowly
Dissipate down the vale;

And all these lines along the sky that measure,
Sorapis and the rocks of Mezzodi
Crumble by foamy miles into the azure
Mediterranean sea:

Whereas to-day at sunrise, under brambles,
A league above the moss and dying pines
I picked this little—in my hand that trembles—
Parcel of columbines.

Now in the Palace Gardens

NOW in the palace gardens warm with age,
On lawn and flower-bed this afternoon
The thin November-coloured foliage
Just as last year unfastens lilting down,

And round the terrace in gray attitude
The very statues are becoming sere
With long presentiment of solitude.
Most of the life that I have lived is here,

Here by the path and autumn's earthy grass
And chestnuts standing down the breadths of sky:
Indeed I know not how it came to pass,
The life I lived here so unhappily.

Yet blessing over all! I do not care
What wormwood I have ate to cups of gall;
I care not what despairs are buried there
Under the ground, no, I care not at all.

Nay, if the heart have beaten, let it break!
I have not loved and lived but only this
Betwixt my birth and grave. Dear Spirit, take
The gratitude that pains so deep it is.

When Spring shall be again, and at your door
You stand to feel the mellower evening wind,
Remember if you will my heart is pure,
Perfectly pure and altogether kind;

How much it aches to linger in these things!
I thought the perfect end of love was peace
Over the long-forgiven sufferings.
But something else, I know not what it is,

The words that came so nearly and then not,
The vanity, the error of the whole,
The strong cross-purpose, oh, I know not what
Cries dreadfully in the distracted soul.

The evening fills the garden, hardly red;
And autumn goes away, like one alone.
Would I were with the leaves that thread by thread
Softened to soil, I would that I were one.

Fidelity

NOT lost or won but above all endeavour
Thy life like heaven circles around mine;
Thy eyes it seems upon my eyes did shine
Since forever.

For aught he summon up his earliest hour
No man remembers the surprise of day,
Nor where he saw with virgin wonder play
The first flower.

And o'er the imagination's last horizon
No brain has leaning descried nothing more:
Still there are stars and in the night before
More have arisen.

Not won or lost is unto thee my being;
Our eyes were always so together met.
If mine should close, if ever thine forget,
Time is dying.

At Sainte-Marguerite

THE gray tide flows and flounders in the rocks
Along the crannies up the swollen sand.

Far out the reefs lie naked—dunes and blocks
Low in the watery wind. A shaft of land
Going to sea thins out the western strand.

It rains, and all along and always gulls
Career sea-screaming in and weather-glossed.
It blows here, pushing round the cliff; in lulls
Within the humid stone a motion lost
Ekes out the flurried heart-beat of the coast.

It blows and rains a pale and whirling mist
This summer morning. I that hither came—
Was it to pluck this savage from the schist.
This crazy yellowish bloom without a name,
With leathern blade and tortured wiry frame?

Why here alone, away, the forehead pricked
With dripping salt and fingers damp with brine,
Before the offal and the derelict
And where the hungry sea-wolves howl and whine
Like human hours? now that the columbine

Stands somewhere shaded near the fields that fall
Great starry sheaves of the delighted year,
And globing rosy on the garden wall
The peach and apricot and soon the pear
Drip in the teasing hand their sugared tear.

Inland a little way the summer lies.
Inland a little and but yesterday
I saw the weary teams, I heard the cries
Of sicklemen across the fallen hay,
And buried in the sunburned stacks I lay

Tasting the straws and tossing, laughing soft
Into the sky's great eyes of gold and blue
And nodding to the breezy leaves aloft
Over the harvest's mellow residue.
But sudden then—then strangely dark it grew.

How good it is, before the dreary flow
Of cloud and water, here to lie alone
And in this desolation to let go
Down the ravine one with another, down
Across the surf to linger or to drown

The loves that none can give and none receive,
The fearful asking and the small retort,
The life to dream of and the dream to live!
Very much more is nothing than a part,
Nothing at all and darkness in the heart.

I would my manhood now were like the sea.—
Thou at high-tide, when compassing the land
Thou find'st the issue short, questioningly
A moment poised, thy floods then down the strand
Sink without rancour, sink without command,

Sink of themselves in peace without despair,
And turn as still the calm horizon turns,
Till they repose little by little nowhere
And the long light unfathomable burns
Clear from the zenith stars to the sea-ferns.

Thou art thy Priest, thy Victim and thy God.
Thy life is bulwarked with a thread of foam,
And of the sky, the mountains and the sod
Thou askest nothing, evermore at home
In thy own self's perennial masterdom.

Leave Him Now Quiet

LEAVE him now quiet by the way
To rest apart.
I know what draws him to the dust alway
And churns him in the builder's lime:
He has the fright of time.

I heard it knocking in his breast
A minute since;
His human eyes did wince,
He stubborned like the massive slaughter beast
And as a thing o'erwhelmed with sound
Stood bolted to the ground.

Leave him, for rest alone can cure—
If cure there be—
This waif upon the sea.
He is of those who slanted the great door
And listened—wretched little lad—
To what they said.

Near Helikon

BY such an all-embalming summer day
As sweetens now among the mountain pines
Down to the cornland yonder and the vines,
To where the sky and sea are mixed in gray,
How do all things together take their way
Harmonious to the harvest, bringing wines
And bread and light and whatsoe'er combines
In the large wreath to make it round and gay.
To me my troubled life doth now appear
Like scarce distinguishable summits hung
Around the blue horizon: places where
Not even a traveller purposeth to steer,—
Whereof a migrant bird in passing sung,
And the girl closed her window not to hear.

In Ampezzo (II.)

IN days of summer let me go
Up over fields, at afternoon,
And, lying low against my stone

On slopes the scythe has pain to mow,
Look southward a long hour alone.

For evening there is lovelier
Than vision or enchanted tale:
When wefts of yellow vapour pale,
And green goes down to lavender
On rosy cliffs, shutting the vale

Whose smoke of violet forest seeks
The steep and rock, where crimson crawls,
And drenched with carmine fire their walls;
Go thinly smouldering to the peaks,
High, while the sun now somewhere falls;

Except a cloud-caught ochre spark
In one last summit,—and away
On lazy wings of mauve and gray,
Away and near, like memory, dark
Is bluish with the filmy day,

What time the swallows flying few
Over uncoloured fields become
Small music thro' the shining dome;
And sleepy leaves are feeling dew
Above the crickets' under-hum,

In bye-tone to a savage sound
Of waters that with discord smite
The frigid wind and lurking light,
And swarm behind the gloom, and bound
Down sleepy valleys to the night:

And thoughts delicious of the whole,
Gathering over all degrees,
Yet sad for something more than these,
Across low meadow-lands of soul
Grow large, like north-lights no one sees.

I care not if the painter wrought
The tinted dream his spirit hid,
When rich with sight he saw, amid
A jarring world, one tone, and caught
The colour passing to his lid.

Be still musician and thy choir!
Where trumpets blare and the bow stings
In symphony a thousand strings
To cry of wood-wind and desire
Of one impassioned voice that sings.

Nay, silence have the poet's mode
And southern vowels all! let die,
So ghostly-vague, the northern cry!—
This world is better than an ode
And evening more than elegy.—

Yet what shall singing do for me?
How shall a verse be crimsoned o'er?
I ever dream one art the more;
I who did never paint would see
The colour painters languish for,

And wisely use the instruments
That earlier harmony affords;
I dream a poesy of chords
Embroidered very rich in tints:
'Tis not enough, this work of words.

A wilder thing inflames our hearts.
We do refuse to sift and share.
For we would musically bear
The burden of the gathered arts
Together which divided were,

And, passing Knowledge, highly rear
Upon her iron architrave
These airy images we crave,—
Lest wholly vain and fallen sheer
Our vision dress us for the grave.

Mnemosyne

IT'S autumn in the country I remember.

How warm a wind blew here about the ways!
And shadows on the hillside lay to slumber
During the long sun-sweetened summer-days.

It's cold abroad the country I remember.

The swallows veering skimmed the golden grain
At midday with a wing aslant and limber;
And yellow cattle browsed upon the plain.

It's empty down the country I remember.

I had a sister lovely in my sight:
Her hair was dark, her eyes were very sombre;
We sang together in the woods at night.

It's lonely in the country I remember.

The babble of our children fills my ears,
And on our hearth I stare the perished ember
To flames that show all starry thro' my tears.

It's dark about the country I remember.

AMY LOWELL

Little Ivory Figures Pulled with String

IS it the tinkling of mandolins which disturbs you?
Or the dropping of bitter-orange petals among the coffee-cups?

Or the slow creeping of the moonlight between the olive-trees?

Drop! drop! the rain

Upon the thin plates of my heart.

String your blood to chord with this music,
 Stir your heels upon the cobbles to the rhythm of a dance-tune.
 They have slim thighs and arms of silver;
 The moon washes away their garments;
 They make a pattern of fleeing feet in the branch shadows,
 And the green grapes knotted about them
 Burst as they press against one another.

The rain knocks upon the plates of my heart,

They are crumpled with its beating.

Would you drink only from your brains, Old Man?

See, the moonlight has reached your knees,

It falls upon your head in an accolade of silver.

Rise up on the music,

Fling against the moon-drifts in a whorl of young light bodies:

Leaping grape-clusters,

Vine leaves tearing from a grey wall.

You shall run, laughing, in a braid of women,

And weave flowers with the frosty spines of thorns.

Why do you gaze into your glass,

And jar the spoons with your finger-tapping?

The rain is rigid on the plates of my heart.

The murmur of it is loud—loud.

The City of Falling Leaves

LEAVES fall,
 Brown leaves,
 Yellow leaves streaked with brown.
 They fall,
 Flutter,
 Fall again.
 The brown leaves,
 And the streaked yellow leaves,

Loosen on their branches
And drift slowly downwards.
One,
One, two, three,
One, two, five.
All Venice is a falling of Autumn leaves—
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.

“That sonnet, *Abate*,
Beautiful,
I am quite exhausted by it.
Your phrases turn about my heart
And stifle me to swooning.
Open the window, I beg.
Lord! What a strumming of fiddles and mandolins!
'Tis really a shame to stop indoors.
Call my maid, or I will make you lace me yourself.
Fie, how hot it is, not a breath of air!
See how straight the leaves are falling.
Marianna, I will have the yellow satin caught up with silver
fringe,
It peeps out delightfully from under a mantle.
Am I well painted to-day, *caro Abate mio*?
You will be proud of me at the *Ridotto*, hey?
Proud of being *Cavalier Servente* to such a lady?”
“Can you doubt it, *Bellissima Contessa*?
A pinch more rouge on the right cheek,
And Venus herself shines less. . .”
“You bore me, *Abate*,
I vow I must change you!
A letter, Achmet?
Run and look out of the window, *Abate*.
I will read my letter in peace.”
The little black slave with the yellow satin turban
Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.
His yellow turban and black skin
Are gorgeous—barbaric.
The yellow satin dress with its silver flashings

Lies on a chair
Beside a black mantle and a black mask.
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous—barbaric.
The lady reads her letter,
And the leaves drift slowly
Past the long windows.
“How silly you look, my dear *Abate*,
With that great brown leaf in your wig.
Pluck it off, I beg you,
Or I shall die of laughing.”
A yellow wall
Aflare in the sunlight,
Chequered with shadows,
Shadows of vine leaves,
Shadows of masks.
Masks coming, printing themselves for an instant,
Then passing on,
More masks always replacing them.
Masks with tricorns and rapiers sticking out behind
Pursuing masks with plumes and high heels,
The sunlight shining under their insteps.
One,
One, two,
One, two, three,
There is a thronging of shadows on the hot wall,
Filigreed at the top with moving leaves.
Yellow sunlight and black shadows,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous—barbaric.
Two masks stand together,
And the shadow of a leaf falls through them,
Marking the wall where they are not.
From hat-tip to shoulder-tip,
From elbow to sword-hilt,
The leaf falls.
The shadows mingle,
Blur together,
Slide along the wall and disappear.

Gold of mosaics and candles,
And night blackness lurking in the ceiling beams.
Saint Mark's glitters with flames and reflections.
A cloak brushes aside,
And the yellow of satin
Licks out over the coloured inlays of the pavement.
Under the gold crucifixes
There is a meeting of hands
Reaching from black mantles.
Sighing embraces, bold investigations,
Hide in confessionals,
Sheltered by the shuffling of feet.
Gorgeous—barbaric
In its mail of jewels and gold,
Saint Mark's looks down at the swarm of black masks;
And outside in the palace gardens brown leaves fall,
Flutter,
Fall.
Brown.
And yellow streaked with brown.
Blue-black, the sky over Venice,
With a pricking of yellow stars.
There is no moon,
And the waves push darkly against the prow
Of the gondola,
Coming from Malamocco
And streaming toward Venice.
It is black under the gondola hood,
But the yellow of a satin dress
Glares out like the eye of a watching tiger.
Yellow compassed about with darkness,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous—barbaric.
The boatman sings,
It is Tasso that he sings;
The lovers seek each other beneath their mantles,
And the gondola drifts over the lagoon, aslant to the coming
dawn.
But at Malamocco in front,

In Venice behind,
Fall the leaves,
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.
They fall,
Flutter,
Fall.

ROBERT FROST

The Road Not Taken

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Home Burial

HE saw her from the bottom of the stairs
Before she saw him. She was starting down,
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.
She took a doubtful step and then undid it
To raise herself and look again. He spoke
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see
From up there always—for I want to know."
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,
And her face changed from terrified to dull.
He said to gain time: "What is it you see?"
Mounting until she cowered under him,
"I will find out now—you must tell me, dear."
She, in her place, refused him any help
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,
Blind creature; and a while he didn't see.
But at last he murmured, "Oh," and again, "Oh."
"What is it—what?" she said.

"Just that I see."
"You don't," she challenged. "Tell me what it is."

"The wonder is I didn't see at once.
I never noticed it from here before.
I must be wonted to it—that's the reason.
The little graveyard where my people are!
So small the window frames the whole of it.
Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?
There are three stones of slate and one of marble,
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight
On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.
But I understand: it is not the stones,
But the child's mound——"

"Don't, don't, don't, don't," she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm
That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;
And turned on him with such a daunting look,
He said twice over before he knew himself:
"Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?"

"Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!
I must get out of here. I must get air.
I don't know rightly whether any man can."

'Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.
Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs."
He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.
"There's something I should like to ask you, dear."

"You don't know how to ask it."

"Help me, then."

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

"My words are nearly always an offence.
I don't know how to speak of anything
So as to please you. But I might be taught
I should suppose. I can't say I see how.
A man must partly give up being a man
With women-folk. We could have some arrangement
By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off
Anything special you're a mind to name.
Though I don't like such things 'twixt those that love.
Two that don't love can't live together without them.
But two that do can't live together with them."
She moved the latch a little. "Don't, don't go.
Don't carry it to someone else this time.
Tell me about it if it's something human.
Let me into your grief. I'm not so much
Unlike other folks as your standing there
Apart would make me out. Give me my chance,
I do think, though, you overdo it a little.

What was it brought you up to think it the thing
To take your mother-loss of a first child
So inconsolably—in the face of love.
You'd think his memory might be satisfied—"

"There you go sneering now!"

"I'm not, I'm not!

You make me angry. I'll come down to you.
God, what a woman! And it's come to this,
A man can't speak of his own child that's dead."

"You can't because you don't know how.
If you had any feelings, you that dug
With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;
I saw you from that very window there,
Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.
I thought, who is that man? I don't know you.
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,
But I went near to see with my own eyes.
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave
And talk about your everyday concerns.
You had stood the spade up against the wall
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it."

"I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed."
"I can repeat the very words you were saying.
'Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
What had how long it takes a birch to rot
To do with that was in the darkened parlour.

You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go
With anyone to death, comes so far short
They might as well not try to go at all.
No, from the time when one is sick to death,
One is alone, and he dies more alone.
Friends make pretence of following to the grave,
But before one is in it, their minds are turned
And making the best of their way back to life
And living people, and things they understand.
But the world's evil. I won't have my grief so
If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!"

"There, you have said it all and you feel better.
You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.
The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.
Amy! There's someone coming down the road!"
"You—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—"
"If—you—do!" She was opening the door wider.
"Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!*—"

The Wood-Pile

OUT walking in the frozen swamp one grey day
I paused and said, "I will turn back from here.
No, I will go on farther—and we shall see."
The hard snow held me, save where now and then
One foot went down. The view was all in lines
Straight up and down of tall slim trees
Too much alike to mark or name a place by
So as to say for certain I was here
Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.
A small bird flew before me. He was careful
To put a tree between us when he lighted,
And say no word to tell me who he was
Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought.
He thought that I was after him for a feather—

The white one in his tail; like one who takes
Everything said as personal to himself:
One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.
And then there was a pile of wood for which
I forgot him and let his little fear
Carry him off the way I might have gone,
Without so much as wishing him good-night.
He went behind it to make his last stand.
It was a cord of maple, cut and split
And piled—and measured, four by four by eight.
And not another like it could I see.
No runner tracks in this Year's snow looped near it.
And it was older sure than this year's cutting,
Or even last year's or the year's before.
The wood was grey and the bark warping off it
And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle
What held it though on one side was a tree
Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,
These latter about to fall. I thought that only
Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks
Could so forget his handiwork on which
He spent himself, the labour of his axe,
And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

The Fear

A LANTERN light from deeper in the barn
Shone on a man and woman in the door
And threw their lurching shadows on a house
Near by, all dark in every glossy window.
A horse's hoof pawed once the hollow floor,
And the back of the gig they stood beside
Moved in a little. The man grasped a wheel,
The woman spoke out sharply, "Whoa, stand still!
I saw it just as plain as a white plate,"

She said, "as the light on the dashboard ran
Along the bushes at the roadside—a man's face.
You *must* have seen it too."

"I didn't see it.

Are you sure——"

"Yes, I'm sure!"

"——it was a face?"

"Joel, I'll have to look. I can't go in,
I can't, and leave a thing like that unsettled.
Doors locked and curtains drawn will make no difference.
I always have felt strange when we came home
To the dark house after so long an absence,
And the key rattled loudly into place
Seemed to warn someone to be getting out
At one door as we entered at another.
What if I'm right, and someone all the time—
Don't hold my arm!"

"I say it's someone passing."

"You speak as if this were a travelled road.
You forget where we are. What is beyond
That he'd be going to or coming from
At such an hour of night, and on foot too.
What was he standing still for in the bushes?"

"It's not so very late—it's only dark.
There's more in it than you're inclined to say.
Did he look like——?"

"He looked like anyone.
I'll never rest to-night unless I know.
Give me the lantern."

"You don't want the lantern."

She pushed past him and got it for herself.
"You're not to come," she said. "This is my business.
If the time's come to face it, I'm the one
To put it the right way. He'd never dare—
Listen! He kicked a stone. Hear that, hear that!
He's coming towards us. Joel, *go in*—please.
Hark!—I don't hear him now. But please go in."

"In the first place you can't make me believe it's——"

"It is—or someone else he's sent to watch.
And now's the time to have it out with him
While we know definitely where he is.
Let him get off and he'll be everywhere
Around us, looking out of trees and bushes
Till I shan't dare to set a foot outdoors.
And I can't stand it. Joel, let me go!"

"But it's nonsense to think he'd care enough."

"You mean you couldn't understand his caring.
Oh, but you see he hadn't had enough—
Joel, I won't—I won't—I promise you.
We mustn't say hard things. You mustn't either."
"I'll be the one, if anybody goes!
But you give him the advantage with this light
What couldn't he do to us standing here!
And if to see was what he wanted, why
He has seen all there was to see and gone."

He appeared to forget to keep his hold,
But advanced with her as she crossed the grass
"What do you want?" she cried to all the dark.
She stretched up tall to overlook the light
That hung in both hands hot against her skirt.

"There's no one; so you're wrong," he said.

"There is—
What do you want?" she cried, and then herself
Was startled when an answer really came.

"Nothing." It came from well along the road.
She reached a hand to Joel for support:
The smell of scorching woollen made her faint.
"What are you doing round this house at night?"

"Nothing." A pause: there seemed no more to say.
And then the voice again: "You seem afraid.
I saw by the way you whipped up the horse.
I'll just come forward in the lantern light
And let you see."

"Yes, do—Joel, go back!"
She stood her ground against the noisy steps
That came on, but her body rocked a little.

"You see," the voice said.

"Oh." She looked and looked.
"You don't see—I've a child here by the hand."

"What's a child doing at this time of night—?"

"Out walking. Every child should have the memory
Of at least one long-after-bedtime walk.
What, son?"

"Then I should think you'd try to find
Somewhere to walk——"

"The highway as it happens—
We're stopping for the fortnight down at Dean's."
"But if that's all—Joel—you realize—
You won't think anything. You understand?
You understand that we have to be careful.
This is a very, very lonely place.
Joel!" She spoke as if she couldn't turn.
The swinging lantern lengthened to the ground,
It touched, it struck, it clattered and went out.

Birches

WHEN I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snowcrust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
(Now am I free to be poetical?)
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise

To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed it open,
I'd like to get away from earth a while
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a high birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

The Sound of the Trees

II WONDER about the trees.
Why do we wish to bear
Forever the noise of these
More than another noise
So close to our dwelling place?
We suffer them by the day
Till we lose all measure of pace,
And fixity in our joys,
And acquire a listening air.
They are that that talks of going
But never gets away;

And that talks no less for knowing,
As it grows wiser and older,
That now it means to stay.
My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.
I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

Hyla Brook

BY June our brook's run out of song and speed.
Sought for much after that, it will be found
Either to have gone groping underground
(And taken with it all the Hyla breed
That shouted in the mist a month ago,
Like ghost of sleigh-bells in a ghost of snow)—
Or flourished and come up in jewel-weed,
Weak foliage that is blown upon and bent
Even against the way its waters went.
Its bed is left a faded paper sheet
Of dead leaves stuck together by the heat—
A brook to none but who remember long.
This as it will be seen is other far
Than with brooks taken elsewhere in song.
We love the things we love for what they are.

The Oven Bird

THERE is a singer everyone has heard,
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,

Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.
He says the early petal-fall is past
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
On sunny days a moment overcast;
And comes that other fall we name the fall.
He says the highway dust is over all.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

My November Guest

MY Sorrow, when she's here with me,
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
Are beautiful as days can be;
She loves the bare, the withered tree;
She walks the sodden pasture lane.

Her pleasure will not let me stay.
She talks and I am fain to list:
She's glad the birds are gone away,
She's glad her simple worsted grey
Is silver now with clinging mist.

The desolate, deserted trees,
The faded earth, the heavy sky,
The beauties she so truly sees,
She thinks I have no eye for these,
And vexes me for reason why.

Not yesterday I learned to know
The love of bare November days
Before the coming of the snow,
But it were vain to tell her so,
And they are better for her praise.

Mowing

THERE was never a sound beside the wood but one,
And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground.
What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself;
Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun,
Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound—
And that was why it whispered and did not speak.
It was no dream of the gift of idle hours,
Or easy gold at the hand of fay or elf:
Anything more than the truth would have seemed too weak
To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows,
Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers
(Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake.
The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows.
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make.

To Earthward

LOVE at the lips was touch
As sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much;
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,
The flow of—was it musk
From hidden grapevine springs
Down hill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those
Seemed strong when I was young;
The petal of the rose
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark
Of almost too much love,
The sweet of bitter bark
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred
I take away my hand
From leaning on it hard
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:
I long for weight and strength
To feel the earth as rough
To all my length.

Fire and Ice

SOME say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

WHOSE woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Bereft

WHERE had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar?
What would it take my standing there for,
Holding open a restive door,
Looking down hill to a frothy shore?
Summer was past and day was past.
Sombre clouds in the west were massed.
Out in the porch's sagging floor,
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad,
Word I was in my life alone,
Word I had no one left but God.

Desert Places

SNOW falling and night falling fast oh fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

The woods around it have it—it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.

And lonely as it is that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less—
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars—on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

CARL SANDBURG

Cool Tombs

WHEN Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he
forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . in the
dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street,
cash and collateral turned ashes . . . in the dust, in the cool
tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if any get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

Jazz Fantasia

DRUM on your drums, batter on your banjos, sob on the long cool winding saxophones. Go to it, O jazzmen.

Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy timpani, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha-hush with the slippery sandpaper.

Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops, moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible, cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle-cop, bang-bang! you jazzmen, bang altogether drums, traps, banjos, horns, tin cans—make two people fight on the top of a stairway and scratch each other's eyes in a clinch tumbling down the stairs.

Can the rough stuff . . . Now a Mississippi steamboat pushes up the night river with a hoo-hoo-hoo-oo . . . and the green lanterns calling to the high soft stars . . . a red moon rides on the humps of the low river hills . . . Go to it, O jazzmen.

Wind Song

LONG ago I learned how to sleep,
In an old apple orchard where the wind swept by counting
its money and throwing it away,
In a wind-gaunt orchard where the limbs forked out and listened or never listened at all,

In a passel of trees where the branches trapped the wind into
whistling, "Who, who are you?"

I slept with my head in an elbow on a summer afternoon and
there I took a sleep lesson.

There I went away saying: I know why they sleep, I know how
they trap the tricky winds.

Long ago I learned how to listen to the singing wind and how to
forget and how to hear the deep whine,

Slapping and lapsing under the day blue and the night stars:
Who, who are you?

Who can ever forget
listening to the wind go by
counting its money
and throwing it away?

Gone

EVERYBODY loved Chick Lorimer in our town
Far off.

Everybody loved her.

So we all love a wild girl keeping a hold

On a dream she wants.

Nobody knows now where Chick Lorimer went.

Nobody knows why she packed her trunk . . . a few old things

And is gone,

Gone with her little chin

Thrust ahead of her

And her soft hair blowing careless

From under a wide hat,

Dancer, singer, a laughing passionate lover.

Were there ten men or a hundred hunting Chick?

Were there five men or fifty with aching hearts?

Everybody loved Chick Lorimer.

Nobody knows where she's gone.

VACHEL LINDSAY

The Eagle That Is Forgotten

(John P. Altgeld. Born December 30, 1847; died March 12, 1902)

SLEEP softly . . . eagle forgotten . . . under the stone.
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
"We have buried him now," thought your foes, and in secret
rejoiced.
They made a brave show of their mourning, their hatred un-
voiced,
They had snarled at you, barked at you, foamed at you, day after
day,
Now you were ended. They praised you, . . . and laid you
away.

The others that mourned you in silence and terror and truth,
The widow bereft of her pittance, the boy without youth,
The mocked and the scorned and the wounded, the lame and
the poor
That should have remembered forever, . . . remember no more.

Where are those lovers of yours, on what name do they call
The lost, that in armies wept over your funeral pall?
They call on the names of a hundred high-valiant ones,
A hundred white eagles have risen, the sons of your sons,
The zeal in their wings is a zeal that your dreaming began
The valor that wore out your soul in the service of man.

Sleep softly, . . . eagle forgotten, . . . under the stone,
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
Sleep on, O brave-hearted, O wise man, that kindled the flame—
To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name,
To live in mankind, far, far more . . . than to live in a name.

*Poems about the Moon**I. Euclid*

OLD Euclid drew a circle
On a sand-beach long ago.
He bounded and enclosed it
With angles thus and so.
His set of solemn greybeards
Nodded and argued much
Of arc and of circumference,
Diameter and such.
A silent child stood by them
From morning until noon
Because they drew such charming
Round pictures of the moon.

II. Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be

(What Grandpa Told the Children)

THE moon? It is a griffin's egg,
Hatching to-morrow night.
And how the little boys will watch
With shouting and delight
To see him break the shell and stretch
And creep across the sky.
The boys will laugh. The little girls,
I fear, may hide and cry.
Yet gentle will the griffin be,
Most decorous and fat,
And walk up to the milky way
And lap it like a cat.

III. A Sense of Humour

NO man should stand before the moon
To make sweet song thereon,
With dandified importance,
His sense of humour gone.

Nay, let us don the motley cap,
The jester's chastened mien,
If we would woo that looking-glass
And see what should be seen.

O mirror on fair Heaven's wall,
We find there what we bring.
So, let us smile in honest part
And deck our souls and sing.

Yea, by the chastened jest alone
Will ghosts and terrors pass,
And fays, or suchlike friendly things,
Throw kisses through the glass.

IV. What Semiramis Said

THE moon's a steaming chalice
Of honey and venom-wine.
A little of it sipped by night
Makes the long hours divine.
But oh, my reckless lovers,
They drain the cup and wail,
Die at my feet with shaking limbs
And tender lips all pale.
Above them in the sky it bends
Empty and grey and dread.
To-morrow night 'tis full again,
Golden, and foaming red.

V. *The Scissors-Grinder**(What the Tramp Said)*

THE old man had his box and wheel
For grinding knives and shears.
No doubt his bell in village streets
Was joy to children's ears.
And I bethought me of my youth
When such men came around,
And times I asked them in, quite sure
The scissors should be ground.
The old man turned and spoke to me,
His face at last in view.
And then I thought those curious eyes
Were eyes that once I knew.

"The moon is but an emery-wheel
To whet the sword of God,"
He said. "And here beside my fire
I stretch upon the sod
Each night, and dream, and watch the stars
And watch the ghost-clouds go.
And see that sword of God in Heaven
A-waving to and fro.
I see that sword each century, friend,
It means the world-war comes
With all its bloody, wicked chiefs
And hate-inflaming drums.
Men talk of peace, but I have seen
That emery-wheel turn round.
The voice of Abel cries again
To God from out the ground.
The ditches must flow red, the plague
Go stark and screaming by
Each time that sword of God takes edge
Within the midnight sky.
And those that scorned their brothers here
And sowed a wind of shame

Will reap the whirlwind as of old
And face relentless flame."

And thus the scissors-grinder spoke,
His face at last in view.
*And there beside the railroad bridge
I saw the Wandering Jew.*

VI. *Aladdin and the Jinn*

"BRING me soft song," said Aladdin.
"This tailor-shop sings not at all.
Chant me a word of the twilight,
Of roses that mourn in the fall.
Bring me a song like hashish
That will comfort the stale and the sad,
For I would be mending my spirit,
Forgetting these days that are bad,
Forgetting companions too shallow,
Their quarrels and arguments thin,
Forgetting the shouting Muezzin:"—
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Bring me old wines," said Aladdin.
"I have been a starved pauper too long.
Serve them in vessels of jade and of shell,
Serve them with fruit and with song:—
Wines of pre-Adamite Sultans
Digged from beneath the black seas:—
New-gathered dew from the heavens
Dripped down from Heaven's sweet trees,
Cups from the angels' pale tables
That will make me both handsome and wise,
For I have beheld her, the princess,
Firelight and starlight her eyes.
Pauper I am, I would woo her.
And—let me drink wine, to begin,
Though the Koran expressly forbids it."
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Plan me a dome," said Aladdin,
 "That is drawn like the dawn of the moon,
 When the sphere seems to rest on the mountains,
 Half-hidden, yet full-risen soon.
 Build me a dome," said Aladdin,
 "That shall cause all young lovers to sigh,
 The fullness of life and of beauty,
 Peace beyond peace to the eye—
 A palace of foam and of opal,
 Pure moonlight without and within,
 Where I may enthrone my sweet lady."
 "I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

 WALLACE STEVENS

Peter Quince at the Clavier

I

JUST as my fingers on these keys
 Make music, so the selfsame sounds
 On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
 And thus it is that what I feel,
 Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
 Is music. It is like the strain
 Waked in the elders by Susanna.

Of a green evening, clear and warm,
 She bathed in her still garden, while
 The red-eyed elders watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb
In witching chords, and their thin blood
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green water, clear and warm,
Susanna lay.
She searched
The touch of springs,
And found
Concealed imaginings.
She sighed,
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood
In the cool
Of spent emotions.
She felt, among the leaves,
The dew
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,
Still quavering.
The winds were like her maids,
On timid feet,
Fetching her woven scarves,
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand
Muted the night.
She turned—
A cymbal crashed,
And roaring horns.

III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
So evenings die, in their green going,
A wave, interminably flowing.
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
The cowl of winter, done repenting.
So maidens die, to the auroral
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings
Of those white elders; but, escaping,
Left only Death's ironic scraping.
Now, in its immortality, it plays
On the clear viol of her memory,
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Sunday Morning

I

COMPLACENCIES of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a calm darkens among water-lights.
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings
Seem things in some procession of the dead,
Winding across wide water, without sound.
The day is like wide water, without sound,
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
What is divinity if it can come
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
In any balm or beauty of the earth,
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.
These are the measures destined for her soul.

III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave
Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.
He moved among us, as a muttering king,
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,
With heaven, brought such requital to desire
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,
A part of labor and a part of pain,
And next in glory to enduring love,
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,
Before they fly, test the reality
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"
There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped
By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel
The need of some imperishable bliss."
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves
Of sure obliteration on our paths,
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
Whispered a little out of tenderness,
She makes the willow shiver in the sun
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,
With rivers like our own that seek for seas
They never find, the same receding shores
That never touch with inarticulate pang?
Why set the pear upon those river-banks
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,
The silken weavings of our afternoons,
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,
Within whose burning bosom we devise
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,
Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source.
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
The trees, like serafim, and echoing hills,
That choir among themselves long afterward.
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn.
And whence they came and whither they shall go
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."
We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Le Monocle de Mon Oncle

I

"MOTHER of heaven, regina of the clouds,
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,
There is not nothing, no, no, never nothing,
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill."
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?
I wish that I might be a thinking stone.
The sea of spuming thought foists up again
The radiant bubble that she was. And then
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

II

A red bird flies across the golden floor.
It is a red bird that seeks out his choir
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.
A torrent will fall from him when he finds.
Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?
I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.
No spring can follow past meridian.
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss
To make believe a starry *connaissance*.

III

Is it for nothing, then, that old Chinese
Sat titivating by their mountain pools
Or in the Yangtse studied out their beards?
I shall not play the flat historic scale.
You know how Utamaro's beauties sought

The end of love in their all-speaking braids.
You know the mountainous coiffures of Bath.
Alas! Have all the barbers lived in vain
That not one curl in nature has survived?
Why, without pity on these studious ghosts,
Do you come dripping in your hair from sleep?

IV

This luscious and impeccable fruit of life
Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth.
When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet,
Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air.
An apple serves as well as any skull
To be the book in which to read a round,
And is as excellent, in that it is composed
Of what, like skulls, comes rotting back to ground.
But it excels in this, that as the fruit
Of love, it is a book too mad to read
Before one merely reads to pass the time.

V

In the high west there burns a furious star.
It is for fiery boys that star was set
And for sweet-smelling virgins close to them.
The measure of the intensity of love
Is measure, also, of the verve of earth.
For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke
Ticks tediously the time of one more year.
And you? Remember how the crickets came
Out of their mother grass, like little kin,
In the pale nights, when your first imagery
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust.

VI

If men at forty will be painting lakes
The ephemeral blues must merge for them in one,
The basic slate, the universal hue.
There is a substance in us that prevails.
But in our amours amorists discern
Such fluctuations that their scrivening
Is breathless to attend each quirky turn.
When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink
Into the compass and curriculum
Of introspective exiles, lecturing.
It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

VII

The mules that angels ride come slowly down
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.
Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.
These muleteers are dainty of their way.
Meantime, centurions guffaw and beat
Their shrilling tankards on the table-boards.
This parable, in sense, amounts to this:
The honey of heaven may or may not come,
But that of earth both comes and goes at once.
Suppose these couriers brought amid their train
A damsel heightened by eternal bloom.

VIII

Like a dull scholar, I behold, in love,
An ancient aspect touching a new mind.
It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies.
This trivial trope reveals a way of truth.
Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,

Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,
The laughing sky will see the two of us
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

IX

In verses wild with motion, full of din,
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.
Most venerable heart, the lustiest conceit
Is not too lusty for your broadening.
I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything
For the music and manner of the paladins
To make oblation fit. Where shall I find
Bravura adequate to this great hymn?

X

The fops of fancy in their poems leave
Memorabilia of the mystic spouts,
Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,
No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.
But, after all, I know a tree that bears
A semblance to the thing I have in mind.
It stands gigantic, with a certain tip
To which all birds come sometime in their time.
But when they go that tip still tips the tree.

XI

If sex were all, then every trembling hand
Could make us squeak, like dolls, the wished-for words.

But note the unconscionable treachery of fate,
That makes us weep, laugh, grunt and groan, and shout
Doleful heroics, pinching gestures forth
From madness or delight, without regard
To that first, foremost law. Anguishing hour!
Last night, we sat beside a pool of pink,
Clipped with lilies scudding the bright chromes,
Keen to the point of starlight, while a frog
Boomed from his very belly odious chords.

XII

A blue pigeon it is, that circles the blue sky,
On sidelong wing, around and round and round.
A white pigeon it is, that flutters to the ground,
Grown tired of flight. Like a dark rabbi, I
Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,
In lordly study. Every day, I found
Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.
Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,
And still pursue, the origin and course
Of love, but until now I never knew
That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

I

AMONG twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

Domination of Black

AT night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry—the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight
Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks

Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.
I felt afraid.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

Sea Surface Full of Clouds

I

IN that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And in the morning summer hued the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude
Out of the light evolved the moving blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?
C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme.

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.

II

In that November off Tehuantepec
The slopping of the sea grew still one night.
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck

And made one think of chop-house chocolate
And sham umbrellas. And a sham-like green
Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine

Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay.
Who, then, beheld the rising of the clouds
That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen,

Who saw the mortal massives of the blooms
Of water moving on the water-floor?
C'était mon frère du ciel, ma vie, mon or.

The gongs rang loudly as the windy booms
Hoo-hooed it in the darkened ocean-blooms.
The gongs grew still. And then blue heaven spread

Its crystalline pendentives on the sea
And the macabre of the water-glooms
In an enormous undulation fled.

III

In that November off Tehuantepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

And made one think of porcelain chocolate
And pied umbrellas. An uncertain green,
Piano-polished, held the tranced machine

Of ocean, as a prelude holds and holds.
Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard, then,
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?
Oh! C'était mon extase et mon amour.

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire blue.

IV

In that November off Tehuantepec
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck

And made one think of musky chocolate
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank stratagem.
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?

Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.
C'était ma foi, la nonchalance divine.

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,
Would—But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green,
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

V

In that November off Tehuantepec
Night stilled the slopping of the sea. The day
Came, bowing and voluble, upon the deck,

Good clown. . . . One thought of Chinese chocolate
And large umbrellas. And a motley green
Followed the drift of the obese machine

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.
What pistache one, ingenious and droll,
Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery

And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat
At tossing saucers—cloudy-conjuring sea?
C'était mon esprit bâtard, l'ignominie.

The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch
Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind
Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue

To clearing opalescence. Then the sea
And heaven rolled as one and from the two
Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

To the One of Fictive Music

SISTER and mother and diviner love,
And of the sisterhood of the living dead
Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,
And of the fragrant mothers the most dear
And queen, and of diviner love the day
And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread
Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown
Its venom of renown, and on your head
No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth
That separates us from the wind and sea,
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,
By being so much of the things we are,
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none
Gives motion to perfection more serene
Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought,
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men
That music is intensest which proclaims
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,
And of all vigils musing the obscure,
That apprehends the most which sees and names,
As in your name, an image that is sure,
Among the arrant spices of the sun,
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
The difference that heavenly pity brings.
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

Cortège for Rosenbloom

NOW, the wry Rosenbloom is dead
And his finical carriers tread,
On a hundred legs, the tread
Of the dead.
Rosenbloom is dead.

They carry the wizened one
Of the color of horn
To the sullen hill,
Treading a tread
In unison for the dead.

Rosenbloom is dead.
The tread of the carriers does not halt
On the hill, but turns
Up the sky.
They are bearing his body into the sky.

It is the infants of misanthropes
And the infants of nothingness
That tread
The wooden ascents
Of the ascending of the dead.

It is turbans they wear
And boots of fur
As they tread the boards
In a region of frost,
Viewing the frost;

To a chirr of gongs
And a chitter of cries
And the heavy thrum
Of the endless tread
That they tread;

To a jangle of doom
And a jumble of words
Of the intense poem
Of the strictest prose
Of Rosenbloom.

And they bury him there,
Body and soul,

In a place in the sky.
The lamentable tread!
Rosenbloom is dead.

WITTER BYNNER

Correspondent

WORDS, words and words! What else, when men are dead,
Their small lives ended and their sayings said,
Is left of them? Their children go to dust,
As also all their children's children must,
And their belongings are of paltry worth
Against the insatiable consuming earth . . .
I knew a man and almost had forgot
The wisdom of the letters that he wrote;
But words, if words are wise, go on and on
To make a longer note of unison
With man and man than living persons make
With one another for whatever sake.
Therefore I wept tonight when quick words rose
Out of a dead man's grave, whom no one knows.

Charioteer

HERE is a woman whom a man can greet
Equal to equal, which is something said;
For seldom will a man forego conceit
And grant a woman room, till she is dead.
But here's a woman different: a young mind
In a body aging with no age at all.
She's like a living portrait whom you find

Some rainy night in your ancestral hall,
The spark within her eye aware and human . . .
Having Athena's mind, Achilles' heel,
She's mythological, this modern woman.
Torn from the chariot, a loosened wheel
Which kept the chariot upon its course,
She runs ahead, beyond the fallen horse.

Ghost

HE rises from his guests, abruptly leaves,
Because of memory that long moons ago
Others now dead had dined with him, and grieves
Because these newer persons he must know
Might not have loved his ghosts, his unknown dead.
There are new smiles, new answers to his quips;
But there are intervals when, having said
His dinner-table say, he hears dead lips . . .
The dead have ways of mingling in the uses
Of life they leave behind, the dead can rise
When dinner's done. But one of them refuses
To go away and gazes with dead eyes
Piercing him deeper than a rain can reach,
Leaving him only motion, only speech.

At the Last

THERE is no denying
That it matters little,
When through a narrow door
We enter a room together,
Which goes after, which before.

Perhaps you are not dying:
Perhaps—there is no knowing—
I shall slip by and turn and laugh with you

Because it mattered so little,
The order of our going.

Ganymede

WHEN love begins with Ganymede, he gathers
All blossoms that a cloudy rain can bring
And, heedless of the warning of his fathers,
Folds in his arms the elements of spring.
This is a world that vernal things should count in,
There should be only happiness to know,—
A breath of wild-flowers carried from the mountain
And changed, along the waves, to falling snow.
Shade may be cool and comfortable for lovers;
But what great shadow darkening in the sky
Circles and distances, then nears and hovers
As though a vulturous bird of death were by? . . .
Ganymede feels the talon in his spine
Lift him Olympian to lustier wine.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

The Wanderer

A Rococo Study

ADVENT

EVEN in the time when as yet
I had no certain knowledge of her
She sprang from the nest, a young crow,
Whose first flight circled the forest.

I know now how then she showed me
Her mind, reaching out to the horizon,
She close above the tree tops.
I saw her eyes straining at new distance
And as the woods fell from her flying
Likewise they fell from me as I followed—
So that I strongly guessed all that I must put from me
To come through ready for the high courses.

But one day, crossing the ferry
With the great towers of Manhattan before me,
Out at the prow with the sea wind blowing,
I had been wearying many questions
Which she had put on to try me:
How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?
When lo! in a rush, dragging
A blunt boat on the yielding river—
Suddenly I saw her! And she waved me
From the white wet in midst of her playing!
She cried me, "Haia! Here I am, son!
See how strong my little finger is!
Can I not swim well?
I can fly too!" And with that a great sea-gull
Went to the left, vanishing with a wild cry—
But in my mind all the persons of the godhead
Followed after.

CLARITY

"Come!" cried my mind and by her might
That was upon us we flew above the river
Seeking her, grey gulls among the white—
In the air speaking as she had willed it:
"I am given," cried I, "now I know it!
I know now all my time is forespent!
For me one face is all the world!
For I have seen her at last, this day,
In whom age in age is united—

Indifferent, out of sequence, marvellously!
Saving alone that one sequence
Which is the beauty of all the world, for surely
Either there in the rolling smoke spheres below us
Or here with us in the air intercircling,
Certainly somewhere here about us
I know she is revealing these things!"

And as gulls we flew and with soft cries
We seemed to speak, flying, "It is she
The mighty, recreating the whole world,
This the first day of wonders!
She is attiring herself before me—
Taking shape before me for worship,
A red leaf that falls upon a stone!
It is she of whom I told you, old
Forgiveless, unreconcilable;
That high wanderer of by-ways
Walking imperious in beggary!
At her throat is loose gold, a single chain
From among many, on her bent fingers
Are rings from which the stones are fallen,
Her wrists wear a diminished state, her ankles
Are bare! Toward the river! Is it she there?"
And we swerved clamorously downward—
"I will take my peace in her henceforth!"

BROADWAY

It was then she struck—from behind,
In mid air, as with the edge of a great wing!
And instantly down the mists of my eyes
There came crowds walking—men as visions
With expressionless, animate faces;
Empty men with shell-thin bodies
Jostling close above the gutter,
Hasting—nowhere! And then for the first time
I really saw her, really scented the sweat

Of her presence and—fell back sickened!
Ominous, old, painted—
With bright lips, and lewd Jew's eyes
Her might strapped in by a corset
To give her age youth, perfect
In her will to be young she had covered
The godhead to go beside me.
Silent, her voice entered at my eyes
And my astonished thought followed her easily:
“Well, do their eyes shine, do their clothes fit?
These *live* I tell you! Old men with red cheeks,
Young men in gay suits! See them!
Dogged, quivering, impassive—
Well—are these the ones you envied?”
At which I answered her, “Marvellous old queen,
Grant me power to catch something of this day's
Air and sun into your service!
That these toilers after peace and after pleasure
May turn to you, worshippers at all hours!”
But she sniffed upon the words warily—
Yet I persisted, watching for an answer:
“To you, horrible old woman,
Who know all fires out of the bodies
Of all men that walk with lust at heart!
To you, O mighty, crafty prowler
After the youth of all cities, drunk
With the sight of thy archness! All the youth
That come to you, you having the knowledge
Rather than to those uninitiate—
To you, marvellous old queen, give me always
A new marriage—”

But she laughed loudly—
“A new grip upon those garments that brushed me
In days gone by on beach, lawn, and in forest!
May I be lifted still, up and out of terror,
Up from before the death living around me—
Torn up continually and carried
Whatever way the head of your whim is,
A burr upon those streaming tatters—”

But the night had fallen, she stilled me
And led me away.

PATERSON—THE STRIKE

At the first peep of dawn she roused me!
I rose trembling at the change which the night saw!
For there, wretchedly brooding in a corner
From which her old eyes glittered fiercely—
“Go!” she said, and I hurried shivering
Out into the deserted streets of Paterson.

That night she came again hovering
In rags within the filmy ceiling—
“Great Queen, bless me with thy tatters!”
“You are blest, go on!”

“Hot for savagery,
Sucking the air! I went into the city,
Out again, baffled onto the mountain!
Back into the city!

Nowhere
The subtle! Everywhere the electric!

“A short bread-line before a hitherto empty tea shop:
No questions—all stood patiently,
Dominated by one idea: something
That carried them as they are always wanting to be carried,
‘But what is it,’ I asked those nearest me,
‘This thing heretofore unobtainable
That they seem so clever to have put on now!’

“Why since I have failed them can it be anything but their own
brood?

Can it be anything but brutality?
On that at least they’re united! That at least
Is their bean soup, their calm bread and a few luxuries!

“But in me, more sensitive, marvellous old queen,
It sank deep into the blood that I rose upon

The tense air enjoying the dusty fight!
Heavy drink were the low, sloping foreheads
The flat skulls with the unkempt black or blonde hair,
The ugly legs of the young girls, pistons
Too powerful for delicacy!
The women's wrists, the men's arms, red
Used to heat and cold, to toss quartered beeves
And barrels, and milk-cans, and crates of fruit!

"Faces all knotted up like burls on oaks,
Grasping, fox-snouted, thick-lipped,
Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,
Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands.
Nowhere you! Everywhere the electric!

"Ugly, venomous, gigantic!
Tossing me as a great father his helpless
Infant till it shriek with ecstasy
And its eyes roll and its tongue hangs out!—

"I am at peace again, old queen, I listen clearer now."

ABROAD

Never, even in a dream,
Have I winged so high nor so well
As with her, she leading me by the hand,
That first day on the Jersey mountains!
And never shall I forget
The trembling interest with which I heard
Her voice in a low thunder:
"You are safe here. Look, child, look open-mouth!
The patch of road between the steep bramble banks;
The tree in the wind, the white house there, the sky!
Speak to men of these, concerning me!
For never while you permit them to ignore me
in these shall the full of my freed voice
Come grappling the ear with intent!
Never while the air's clear coolness
Is seized to be a coat for pettiness;

Never while richness of greenery
Stands a shield for prurient minds;
Never, permitting these things unchallenged
Shall my voice of leaves and vari-coloured bark come free
through!"

At which, knowing her solitude,
I shouted over the country below me:
"Waken! my people to the boughs green
With ripening fruit within you!
Waken to the myriad cinquefoil
In the waving grass of your minds!
Waken to the silent phoebe nest
Under the eaves of your spirit!"

But she, stooping nearer the shifting hills
Spoke again. "Look there! See them!
There in the oat field with the horses,
See them there! bowed by their passions
Crushed down, that had been raised as a roof beam!
The weight of the sky is upon them
Under which all roof beams crumble.
There is none but the single roof beam:
There is no love bears against the great firefly!"
At this I looked up at the sun
Then shouted again with all the might I had.
But my voice was a seed in the wind.
Then she, the old one, laughing
Seized me and whirling about bore back
To the city, upward, still laughing
Until the great towers stood above the marshland
Wheeling beneath: the little creeks, the mallows
That I picked as a boy, the Hackensack
So quiet that seemed so broad formerly:
The crawling trains, the cedar swamp on the one side—
All so old, so familiar—so new now
To my marvelling eyes as we passed
Invisible.

SOOTHSAY

Eight days went by, eight days
Comforted by no nights, until finally:
"Would you behold yourself old, beloved?"
I was pierced, yet I consented gladly
For I knew it could not be otherwise.
And she—"Behold yourself old!
Sustained in strength, wielding might in gript surges!
Not bodying the sun in weak leaps
But holding way over rockish men
With fern tree fingers on their little crags,
Their hollows, the new Atlas, to bear them
For pride and for mockery! Behold
Yourself old! winding with slow might—
A vine among oaks—to the thin tops:
Leaving the leafless leaved,
Bearing purple clusters! Behold
Yourself old! birds are behind you.
You are the wind coming that stills birds,
Shakes the leaves in booming polyphony—
Slow, winning high way amid the knocking
Of boughs, evenly crescendo,
The din and bellow of the male wind!
Leap then from forest into foam!
Lash about from low into high flames
Tipping sound, the female chorus—
Linking all lions, all twitterings
To make them nothing! Behold yourself old!"
As I made to answer she continued,
A little wistfully yet in a voice clear cut:
"Good is my overlip and evil
My underlip to you henceforth:
For I have taken your soul between my two hands
And this shall be as it is spoken."

ST. JAMES' GROVE

And so it came to that last day
When, she leading by the hand, we went out

Early in the morning, I heavy of heart
For I knew the novitiate was ended
The ecstasy was over, the life begun.

In my woollen shirt and the pale blue necktie
My grandmother gave me, there I went
With the old queen right past the houses
Of my friends down the hill to the river
As on any usual day, any errand.
Alone, walking under trees,
I went with her, she with me in her wild hair,
By Santiago Grove and presently
She bent forward and knelt by the river,
The Passaic, that filthy river.
And there dabbling her mad hands,
She called me close beside her.
Raising the water then in the cupped palm
She bathed our brows wailing and laughing:
"River, we are old, you and I,
We are old and by bad luck, beggars.
Lo, the filth in our hair, our bodies stink!
Old friend, here I have brought you
The young soul you long asked of me.
Stand forth, river, and give me
The old friend of my revels!
Give me the well-worn spirit
For here I have made a room for it,
And I will return to you forthwith
The youth you have long asked of me:
Stand forth, river, and give me
The old friend of my revels!"

And the filthy Passaic consented!

Then she, leaping up with a fierce cry:
"Enter, youth, into this bulk!
Enter, river, into this young man!"
Then the river began to enter my heart,
Eddying back cool and limpid

Into the crystal beginning of its days.
But with the rebound it leaped forward:
Muddy, then black and shrunken
Till I felt the utter depth of its rottenness
The vile breadth of its degradation
And dropped down knowing this was me now.
But she lifted me and the water took a new tide
Again into the older experiences,
And so, backward and forward,
It tortured itself within me
Until time had been washed finally under,
And the river had found its level
And its last motion had ceased
And I knew all—it became me.
And I knew this for double certain
For there, whitely, I saw myself
Being borne off under the water!
I could have shouted out in my agony
At the sight of myself departing
Forever—but I bit back my despair
For she had averted her eyes
By which I knew well what she was thinking—
And so the last of me was taken.

Then she, "Be mostly silent!"
And turning to the river, spoke again:
"For him and for me, river, the wandering,
But by you I leave for happiness
Deep foliage, the thickest beeches—
Though elsewhere they are all dying—
Tallest oaks and yellow birches
That dip their leaves in you, mourning,
As now I dip my hair, immemorial
Of me, immemorial of him,
Immemorial of these our promises!
Here shall be a bird's paradise,
They sing to you remembering my voice:
Here the most secluded spaces
For miles around, hallowed by a stench

To be our joint solitude and temple;
In memory of this clear marriage
And the child I have brought you in the late years,
Live, river, live in luxuriance
Remembering this our son,
In remembrance of me and my sorrow
And of the new wandering!"

ELINOR WYLIE

This Corruptible

THE Body, long oppressed
And pierced, then prayed for rest
(Being but apprenticed to the other Powers);
And kneeling in that place
Implored the thrust of grace
Which makes the dust lie level with the flowers.

Then did that fellowship
Of three, the Body strip;
Beheld his wounds, and none among them mortal;
The Mind severe and cool;
The Heart still half a fool;
The fine-spun Soul, a beam of sun can startle.

These three, a thousand years
Had made adventurers
Amid all villainies the earth can offer,
Applied them to resolve
From the universal gulph
What pangs the poor material flesh may suffer.

"This is a pretty pass;
To hear the growing grass
Complain; the clay cry out to be translated;
Will not this grosser stuff
Receive reward enough
If stabled after labouring, and baited?"

Thus spoke the Mind in scorn:
The Heart, which had outworn
The Body, and was weary of its fashion,
Preferring to be dressed
In skin of bird or beast,
Replied more softly, in feigned compassion.

"Anatomy most strange
Crying to chop and change;
Inferior copy of a higher image;
While I, the noble guest,
Sick of your second-best
Sigh for embroidered archangelic plumage:

"For shame, thou fustian cloak!"
And then the Spirit spoke;
Within the void it swung securely tethered
By strings composed of cloud;
It spoke both low and loud
Above a storm no lesser star had weathered.

"O lodging for the night!
O house of my delight!
O lovely hovel builded for my pleasure!
Dear tenement of clay
Endure another day
As coffin sweetly fitted to my measure.

"Take Heart, and call to Mind
Although we are unkind;
Although we steal your shelter, strength, and clothing;
'Tis you who shall escape

In some enchanting shape
Or be dissolved to elemental nothing.

"You, the unlucky slave,
Are the lily on the grave;
The wave that runs above the bones a-whitening;
You are the new-mown grass;
And the wheaten bread of the Mass;
And the fabric of the rain, and the lightning.

"If one of us elect
To leave the poor suspect
Imperfect bosom of the earth our parent;
And from the world avert
The Spirit or the Heart
Upon a further and essential errand;

"His chain he cannot slough
Nor cast his substance off;
He bears himself upon his flying shoulder;
The Heart, infirm and dull;
The Mind, in any skull;
Are captive still, and wearier and colder.

" 'Tis you who are the ghost,
Disintegrated, lost;
The burden shed; the dead who need not bear it;
O grain of God in power,
Endure another hour!
It is but for an hour," said the Spirit.

The Eagle and the Mole

A VOID the reeking herd,
Shun the polluted flock,
Live like that stoic bird,
The eagle of the rock.

AMERICAN POETRY

The huddled warmth of crowds
Begets and fosters hate;
He keeps, above the clouds,
His cliff inviolate.

When flocks are folded warm,
And herds to shelter run,
He sails above the storm,
He stares into the sun.

If in the eagle's track
Your sinews cannot leap,
Avoid the lathered pack,
Turn from the steaming sheep.

If you would keep your soul
From spotted sight or sound,
Live like the velvet mole;
Go burrow under ground.

And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stones,
With rivers at their source,
And disembodied bones.

O Virtuous Light

A PRIVATE madness has prevailed
Over the pure and valiant mind;
The instrument of reason failed
And the star-gazing eyes struck blind.

Sudden excess of light has wrought
Confusion in the secret place
Where the slow miracles of thought
Take shape through patience into grace.

Mysterious as steel and flint
The birth of this destructive spark
Whose inward growth has power to print
Strange suns upon the natural dark.

O break the walls of sense in half
And make the spirit fugitive!
This light begotten of itself
Is not a light by which to live!

The fire of farthing tallow dips
Dispels the menace of the skies
So it illuminate the lips
And enter the discerning eyes.

O virtuous light, if thou be man's
Or matter of the meteor stone,
Prevail against this radiance
Which is engendered of its own!

Escape

WHEN foxes eat the last gold grape,
And the last white antelope is killed,
I shall stop fighting and escape
Into a little house I'll build.

But first I'll shrink to fairy size,
With a whisper no one understands,
Making blind moons of all your eyes,
And muddy roads of all your hands.

And you may grope for me in vain
In hollows under the mangrove root,
Or where, in apple-scented rain,
The silver wasp-nests hang like fruit.

Hymn to Earth

FAREWELL, incomparable element,
Whence man arose, where he shall not return;
And hail, imperfect urn
Of his last ashes, and his firstborn fruit;
Farewell, the long pursuit,
And all the adventures of his discontent;
The voyages which sent
His heart averse from home:
Metal of clay, permit him that he come
To thy slow-burning fire as to a hearth;
Accept him as a particle of earth.

Fire, being divided from the other three,
It lives removed, or secret at the core;
Most subtle of the four,
When air flies not, nor water flows,
It disembodied goes,
Being light, elixir of the first decree,
More volatile than he;
With strength and power to pass
Through space, where never his least atom was:
He has no part in it, save as his eyes
Have drawn its emanation from the skies.

A wingless creature heavier than air,
He is rejected of its quintessence;
Coming and going hence,
In the twin minutes of his birth and death,
He may inhale as breath,
As breath relinquish heaven's atmosphere,
Yet in it have no share,
Nor can survive therein
Where its outer edge is filtered pure and thin:
It doth but lend its crystal to his lungs
For his early crying, and his final songs.

The element of water has denied
Its child; it is no more his element;
It never will relent;
Its silver harvests are more sparsely given
Than the rewards of heaven,
And he shall drink cold comfort at its side:
The water is too wide:
The seamew and the gull
Feather a nest made soft and pitiful
Upon its foam; he has not any part
In the long swell of sorrow at its heart.

Hail and farewell, beloved element,
Whence he departed, and his parent once;
See where thy spirit runs
Which for so long hath had the moon to wife;
Shall this support his life
Until the arches of the waves be bent
And grow shallow and spent?
Wisely it cast him forth
With his dead weight of burdens nothing worth,
Leaving him, for the universal years,
A little seawater to make his tears.

Hail, element of earth, receive thy own,
And cherish, at thy charitable breast,
This man, this mongrel beast:
He ploughs the sand, and, at his hardest need,
He sows himself for seed;
He ploughs the furrow, and in this lies down
Before the corn is grown;
Between the apple bloom
And the ripe apple is sufficient room
In time, and the matter, to consume his love
And make him parcel of a cypress grove.

Receive him as thy lover for an hour
Who will not weary, by a longer stay,
The kind embrace of clay;

Even within thine arms he is dispersed
To nothing, as at first;
The air flings downward from its four-quartered tower
Him whom the flames devour;
At the full tide, at the flood,
The sea is mingled with his salty blood:
The traveller dust, although the dust be vile,
Sleeps as thy lover for a little while.

Minotaur

GO study to disdain
The frail, the over-fine
Which tapers to a line
Knotted about the brain.

Unscrupulous to pinch
And polish down the thin
And fire-encasing skin:
Which pares away an inch

Of valuable soil
Whereon a god took root,
Diminishing a brute
With pumice and with oil.

Distrust the exquisite,
The sharpened silver nerve,
The lacquered, nacre'd curve
Wherein a moon is lit.

Aristocratic skulls
Rejected as inept
That innocence kept
'Twixt orbèd eyes of bulls.

Black lava-crustèd coins
Bear heavy brow and limb,

The monstrous stamp of him
Who sprang from Taurine loins.

Gaze ever and at length
Upon the carven head,
Devouring it as bread
To thrive upon its strength.

The sword-deflecting scar
Indented and oblique
That stripes the savage cheek;
The throat made columnar

In copper, and up-raised
To such a trumpet shape
No clangour can escape,—
These only must be praised.

This only is the cure,
To clasp the creature fast;
The flesh survives at last
Because it is not pure.

From flesh refined to glass
A god goes desert-ward,
Astride a spotted pard,
Between an ox and ass.

Let innocence enchant
The flesh to fiercer grain
More fitted to retain
This burning visitant.

Confession of Faith

II LACK the braver mind
That dares to find
The lover friend, and kind.

I fear him to the bone;
I lie alone
By the beloved one,

And, breathless for suspense,
Erect defense
Against love's violence

Whose silences portend
A bloody end
For lover never friend.

But, in default of faith,
In futile breath,
I dream no ill of Death.

True Vine

THERE is a serpent in perfection tarnished
The thin shell pierced, the purity grown fainter,
The virgin silver shield no longer burnished,
The pearly fruit with ruin at its centre.

The thing that sits expectant in our bosoms
Contriving heaven out of very little
Demands such delicate immaculate blossoms
As no malicious verity makes brittle.

This wild fastidious hope is quick to languish;
Its smooth diaphanous escape is swifter
Than the pack of truth; no mortal can distinguish
Its trace upon the durable hereafter.

Not so the obdurate and savage lovely
Whose roots are set profoundly upon trouble;
This flower grows so fiercely and so bravely
It does not even know that it is noble.

This is the vine to love, whose balsams flourish
Upon a living soil corrupt and faulty,
Whose leaves have drunk the skies, and stooped to nourish
The earth again with honey sweet and salty.

EZRA POUND

The Tree

I STOOD still and was a tree amid the wood,
Knowing the truth of things unseen before;
Of Daphne and the laurel bough
And that god-feasting couple old
That grew elm-oak amid the wold.
'Twas not until the gods had been
Kindly entreated, and been brought within
Unto the hearth of their heart's home
That they might do this wonder thing;
Nathless I have been a tree amid the wood
And many a new thing understood
That was rank folly to my head before.

The Tomb of Akır Çaar

I AM thy soul, Nikoptis. I have watched
These five millennia, and thy dead eyes
Moved not, nor ever answer my desire,
And thy light limbs, wherethrough I leapt aflame,
Burn not with me nor any saffron thing.

See, the light grass sprang up to pillow thee,
And kissed thee with a myriad grassy tongues;

But not thou me.
 I have read out the gold upon the wall,
 And wearied out my thought upon the signs.
 And there is no new thing in all this place.

I have been kind. See, I have left the jars sealed,
 Lest thou shouldst wake and whimper for thy wine.
 And all thy robes I have kept smooth on thee.
 O thou unmindful! How should I forget!
 —Even the river many days ago,
 The river? thou wast over young.
 And three souls came upon Thee—
 And I came.
 And I flowed in upon thee, beat them off;
 I have been intimate with thee, known thy ways.
 Have I not touched thy palms and finger-tips,
 Flowed in, and through thee and about thy heels?
 How 'came I in'? Was I not thee and Thee?

And no sun comes to rest me in this place,
 And I am torn against the jagged dark,
 And no light beats upon me, and you say
 No word, day after day.

Oh! I could get me out, despite the marks
 And all their crafty work upon the door,
 Out through the glass-green fields. . . .

.

Yet it is quiet here:

I do not go."

Portrait d'une Femme

YOUR mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,
 London has swept about you this score years

And bright ships left you this or that in fee:
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.
Great minds have sought you—lacking someone else.
You have been second always. Tragical?
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,
One average mind—with one thought less, each year.
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit
Hours, where something might have floated up.
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you
And takes strange gain away:
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale or two,
Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else
That might prove useful and yet never proves,
That never fits a corner or shows use,
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,
These are your riches, your great store; and yet
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:
In the slow float of differing light and deep,
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,
Nothing that's quite your own.
Yet this is you.

Apparuit

GOLDEN rose the house, in the portal I saw
thee, a marvel, carven in subtle stuff, a
portent. Life died down in the lamp and flickered,
caught at the wonder.

Crimson, frosty with dew, the roses bend where
thou afar, moving in the glamorous sun,

drinkst in life of earth, of the air, the tissue
golden about thee.

Green the ways, the breath of the fields is thine there,
open lies the land, yet the steely going
darkly hast thou dared and the dreaded æther
parted before thee.

Swift at courage thou in the shell of gold, cast-
ing a-loose the cloak of the body, camest
straight, then shone thine oriel and the stunned light
faded about thee.

Half the graven shoulder, the throat aflash with
strands of light inwoven about it, loveli-
est of all things, frail alabaster, ah me!
swift in departing.

Clothed in goldish weft, delicately perfect,
gone as wind! The cloth of the magical hands:
Thou a slight thing, thou in access of cunning
dar'dst to assume this?

A Virginal

“NO, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.
I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness.
For my surrounding air hath a new lightness;
Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly
And left me cloaked as with a gauze of æther;
As with sweet leaves; as with subtle clearness.
Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness
To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.
No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavour,
Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.
Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,
As winter's wound with her sleight hand she staunches,
Hath of the trees a likeness of the savour:
As white their bark, so white this lady's hours.”

The Return

SEE, they return; ah, see the tentative
Movements, and the slow feet,
The trouble in the pace and the uncertain
Wavering!

See, they return, one, and by one,
With fear, as half-awakened;
As if the snow should hesitate
And murmur in the wind,
 and half turned back;
These were the "Wing'd-with-Awe,"
 Inviolable.

Gods of the wingèd shoe!
With them the silver hounds,
 sniffing the trace of air!

Haie! Haie!
 These were the swift to harry;
These the keen-scented;
These were the souls of blood.

Slow on the leash,
 pallid the leash-men!

The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter

WHILE my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
For ever and for ever and for ever.
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

By Rihaku

Dance Figure

For the Marriage in Cana of Galilee

DARK eyed,
O woman of my dreams,
Ivory sandalled,
There is none like thee among the dancers,
None with swift feet.

I have not found thee in the tents,
In the broken darkness.
I have not found thee at the well-head
Among the women with pitchers.

Thine arms are as a young sapling under the bark;
Thy face as a river with lights.

White as an almond are thy shoulders;
As new almonds stripped from the husk.
They guard thee not with eunuchs;
Not with bars of copper.

Gilt turquoise and silver are in the place of thy rest.
A brown robe, with threads of gold woven in patterns, hast thou
gathered about thee,
O Nathat-Ikanaia, 'Tree-at-the-river.'

As a rillet among the sedge are thy hands upon me;
Thy fingers a frosted stream.

Thy maidens are white like pebbles;
Their music about thee!

There is none like thee among the dancers;
None with swift feet.

Ité

GO, my songs, seek your praise from the young and from
the intolerant,
Move among the lovers of perfection alone.
Seek ever to stand in the hard Sophoclean light
And take your wounds from it gladly.

Lament of the Frontier Guard

BY the North Gate, the wind blows full of sand,
 Lonely from the beginning of time until now!
 Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.
 I climb the towers and towers
 to watch out the barbarous land:
 Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.
 There is no wall left to this village.
 Bones white with a thousand frosts,
 High heaps, covered with trees and grass;
 Who brought this to pass?
 Who has brought the flaming imperial anger?
 Who has brought the army with drums and with kettle-drums?
 Barbarous kings.
 A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,
 A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,
 Three hundred and sixty thousand,
 And sorrow sorrow like rain.
 Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning.
 Desolate, desolate fields,
 And no children of warfare upon them,
 No longer the men for offence and defence.
 Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,
 With Rihaku's name forgotten,
 And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

By Rihaku

Taking Leave of a Friend

BLUE mountains to the north of the walls,
 White river winding about them;
 Here we must make separation
 And go out through a thousand miles of dead grass.

Mind like a floating wide cloud,
 Sunset like the parting of old acquaintances

Who bow over their clasped hands at a distance.
Our horses neigh to each other
as we are departing.

By Rihaku

ALFRED KREYMBORG

Arabs

MELANCHOLY lieth dolorously ill,
One heel full fatally smitten:
Melancholy twitcheth and sigheth:
"Must such as I, because of an itch,
Move from the cheery sloth of a couch,
From watching my valorous nomad musings
Coming and passing like pilgrims en route
From mooning philosophy on to the sun—
Must such as I, almost ready to follow them,
Legs follow musings as sheep follow bells—
Must such as I, because of a scratch
Imprinted by small ignominious teeth
Of a small, black, common, effeminate witch,
Surely not one of my bidding—*move?*
What way is this, God, to make a man move?"
And his bed-fellow,
Happiness, petrified, groaneth:
"What way is this, God, to make a man stone?"

*Nun Snow**A Pantomime of Beads**Earth Voice*

Is she
Thoughtless of life,
A lover of imminent death,
Nun Snow
Touching her strings of white beads?
Is it her unseen hands
Which urge the beads to tremble?
Does Nun Snow,
Aware of the death she must die alone,
Away from the nuns
Of the green beads,
Of the ochre and brown,
Of the purple and black—
Does she improvise
Along those soundless strings
In the worldly hope
That the answering, friendly tune,
The faithful, folk-like miracle,
Will shine in a moment or two?

Moon Voice

Or peradventure,
Are the beads merely wayward,
On an evening so soft,
And One Wind
Is so gentle a mesmerist
As he draws them and her with his hand?

Earth Voice

Was it Full Moon,
Who contrives tales of this order,
And himself loves the heroine,
Nun Snow—

Wind Voice

Do you see his beads courting hers?—
Lascivious monk!—

Earth Voice

Was it Full Moon,
Slyly innocent of guile,
Propounder of sorrowless whimses,
Who breathed that suspicion?
Is it One Wind,
The wily, scholarly pedant—
Is it he who retorts—

Wind Voice

Like olden allegros
In olden sonatas,
All tales have two themes,
She is beautiful,
He is beautiful,
With the traditional movement,
Their beads court each other,
Revealing a cadence as fatally true
As the sum which follows a one-plus-one—
So, why inquire further?
Nay, inquire further,
Deduce it your fashion!
Nun Snow,
As you say,
Touches her strings of white beads,
Full Moon,
Let you add,
His lute of yellow strings;
And, our Night
Is square, nay,
Our Night
Is round, nay
Our Night
Is a blue balcony—
And therewith close your inquisition!

Earth Voice

Who urged the beads to tremble?
They're still now!
Fallen, or cast over me!
Nun, Moon, and Wind are gone!
Are they betraying her?—

Moon Voice

Ask our Night—

Earth Voice

Did the miracle appear?—

Moon Voice

Ask our Night,
Merely a child on a balcony,
Letting down her hair and
Black beads, a glissando—
Ask her what she means,
Dropping the curtain so soon!

*Manikin and Minikin***A Bisque-Play*

(Seen through an oval frame, one of the walls of a parlour.
The wallpaper is a conventionalized pattern. Only the shelf of

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the mantelpiece shows. At each end, seated on pedestals turned slightly away from one another, two aristocratic bisque figures, a boy in delicate cerise and a girl in cornflower blue. Their shadows join in a grotesque silhouette. In the centre, an ancient clock whose tick acts as the metronome for the sound of their high voices. Presently the mouths of the figures open and shut after the mode of ordinary conversation.)

She—Manikin!

He—Minikin?

She—That fool of a servant has done it again.

He—I should say she's more than a fool.

She—A meddlesome busybody—

He—A brittle-fingered noddly!

She—Which way are you looking? What do you see?

He—The everlasting armchair,
The everlasting tiger skin,
The everlasting yellow, green, and purple books,
The everlasting portrait of milord—

She—Oh these Yankees!—and I see
The everlasting rattan rocker
The everlasting samovar,
The everlasting noisy piano,
The everlasting portrait of milady—

He—Simpering spectacle!

She—What does she want, always dusting?

He—I should say—
That is, i'd consider the thought—

She—You'd consider a lie—
Oh Manikin—
You're trying to defend her!

He—I'm not defending her—

She—You're trying to—

He—I'm not trying to—

She—Then what are you trying to—

He—Well, I'd venture to say,
If she'd only stay away some morning—

She—That's what I say in my dreams!

He—She and her broom—

She—Her everlasting broom—

He—She wouldn't be sweeping—

She—Every corner, every cranny, every crevice—

He—And the dust wouldn't move—

She—Wouldn't crawl, wouldn't rise, wouldn't fly—

He—And cover us all over—

She—Like a spider-web—ugh!

He—Everlasting dust has been most of our life—

She—Everlasting years and years of dust!

He—You on your lovely blue gown—

She—And you on your manly pink cloak.

He—If she didn't sweep, we wouldn't need dusting—

She—Nor need taking down, I should say—

He—With her stupid, clumsy hands—

She—Her crooked, monkey paws—

He—And we wouldn't need putting back—

She—I with my back to you—

He—I with my back to you.

She—It's been hours, days, weeks—

By the sound of that everlasting clock—

And the coming of day and the going of day—

Since I saw you last!

He—What's the use of the sun

With its butterfly wings of light—

What's the use of a sun made to see by—

If I can't see you!

She—Manikin!

He—Minikin?

She—Say that again!

He—Why should I say it again—don't you know?

She—I know, but sometimes I doubt—

He—Why do you, what do you doubt?

She—Please say it again!

He—What's the use of a sun—

She—What's the use of a sun?

He—That was made to see by—

She—That was made to see by?

He—If I can't see you!

She—Oh, Manikin!

He—Minikin?

She—If you hadn't said that again,
My doubt would have filled a balloon.

He—Your doubt, which doubt, what doubt?

She—And although I can't move,
Although I can't move unless somebody shoves me,
One of these days when the sun isn't here,
I would have slipped over the edge
Of this everlasting shelf—

He—Minikin!

She—And fallen to that everlasting floor
Into so many fragments,
They'd never paste Minikin together again!

He—Minikin, Minikin!

She—They'd have to set another here—
Some Ninikin, I'm assured!

He—Why do you chatter so, prattle so?

She—Because of my doubt—
Because I'm as positive as I am
That I sit here with my knees in a knot—
That that human creature—loves you.

He—Loves me?

She—And you her!

He—Minikin!

She—When she takes us down she holds you much longer.

He—Minikin!

She—I'm sufficiently feminine—
And certainly old enough—
I and my hundred and seventy years—
I can see, I can feel
By her manner of touching me
And her flicking me with her mop—
The creature hates me—
She'd like to drop me, that's what she would!

He—Minikin!

She—Don't you venture defending her!
Booby—you don't know live women!
When I'm in the right position
I can note how she fondles you,

Pets you like a parrot with her finger tip,
Blows a pinch of dust from your eye
With her softest breath,
Holds you off at arm's length
And fixes you with her spider look,
Actually holds you against her cheek—
Her rose-tinted cheek—
Before she releases you!
If she didn't turn us apart so often,
I wouldn't charge her with insinuation;
But now I know she loves you—
She's as jealous as I am—
And poor dead me in her live power!
Manikin?

He—Minikin?

She—If you could see me—
The way you see her—

He—But I see you—
See you always—
See only you!

She—If you could see me
The way you see her,
You'd still love me,
You'd love me the way you do her!
Who made me what I am?
Who dreamed me in motionless clay?

He—Minikin?

She—Manikin?

He—Will you listen to me?

She—No!

He—Will you listen to me?

She—No.

He—Will you listen to me?

She—Yes.

He—I love you—

She—No!

He—I've always loved you—

She—No.

He—You doubt that?

She—Yes!

He—You doubt that?

She—Yes.

He—You doubt that?

She—No.

You've always loved me—

Yes—

But you don't love me now—

No—

Not since that rose-face encountered your glance—

No.

He—Minikin!

She—If I could move about the way she can—

If I had feet—

Dainty white feet which could twinkle and twirl—

I'd dance you so prettily

You'd think me a sun butterfly—

If I could let down my hair

And prove you it's longer than larch hair—

If I could raise my black brows

Or shrug my narrow shoulders,

Like a queen or a countess—

If I could turn my head, tilt my head,

This way and that—like a swan—

Ogle my eyes, like a peacock,

Till you'd marvel,

They're green, nay, violet, nay, yellow, nay, gold—

If I could move, only move,

Just the moment of an inch—

You would see what I could be!

It's a change, it's a change,

You men ask of women!

He—A change?

She—You're eye-sick, heart-sick

Of seeing the same foolish porcelain thing,

A hundred years old,

A hundred and fifty,

And sixty, and seventy—

I don't know how old I am!

He—Not an exhalation older than I—
Not an inhalation younger!
Minikin?

She—Manikin?

He—Will you listen to me?

She—No!

He—Will you listen to me?

She—No.

He—Will you listen to me?

She—Yes.

He—I don't love that creature—

She—You do.

He—I can't love that creature—

She—You can.

He—Will you listen to me?

She—Yes—

If you'll tell me—

If you'll prove me—

So my last particle of dust—

The tiniest speck of a molecule—

The merest electron—

He—Are you listening?

She—Yes!

He—To begin with—

I dislike, suspect, deplore—

I had best say, feel compassion

For what is called, humanity—

Or the animate, as opposed to the inanimate—

She—You say that so wisely—

You're such a philosopher—

Say it again!

He—That which is able to move

Can never be steadfast, you understand?

Let us consider the creature at hand

To whom you have referred

With an undue excess of admiration

Adulterated with an undue excess of envy—

She—Say that again!

He—To begin with—

I can only see part of her at once.

She moves into my vision;

She moves out of my vision;

She is doomed to be wayward.

She—Yes, but that which you see of her—

He—Is ugly, commonplace, unsightly.

Her face a rose-face?

It's veined with blood and the skin of it wrinkles—

Her eyes are ever so near to a hen's—

Her movements,

If one would pay such a gait with regard—

Her gait is unspeakably ungainly—

Her hair—

She—Her hair?

He—Luckily I've never seen it down—

I daresay it comes down in the dark,

When it looks, most assuredly, like tangled weeds—

She—Again, Manikin, that dulcet phrase!

He—Even were she beautiful,

She were never so beautiful as thou!

She—Now you're a poet, Manikin!

He—Even were she so beautiful as thou—

Lending her your eyes,

And the exquisite head which holds them—

Like a cup two last beads of wine,

Like a stone two last drops of rain,

Green, nay, violet, nay, yellow, nay, gold—

She—Faster, Manikin!

He—I can't, Minikin!

Words were never given to man

To phrase such a one as you are—

Inanimate symbols

Can never embrace, embody, hold

The animate dream that you are—

I must cease.

She—Manikin!

He—And even were she so beautiful as thou,

She couldn't stay beautiful.

She—Stay beautiful?

He—Humans change with each going moment.
That is a grey-haired platitude.
Just as I can see that creature
Only when she touches my vision,
So I could only see her once, were she beautiful—
At best, twice or thrice—
You're more precious than when you came!

She—And you!

He—Human pathos penetrates still deeper
When one determines their inner life,
As we've pondered their outer.
Their inner changes far more desperately.

She—How so, wise Manikin?

He—They have what philosophy terms, moods,
And moods are more pervious to modulation
Than pools to idle breezes.
These people may say, to begin with—
I love you.
This may be true, I'm assured—
As true as when *we* say, I love you.
But they can only say,
I love you,
So long as the mood breathes,
So long as the breezes blow,
So long as water remains wet.
They are honest—
They mean what they say—
Passionately, tenaciously, tragically—
But when the mood languishes,
They have to say,
If it be they are honest—
I do not love you.
Or they have to say,
I love you,
To somebody else.

She—To somebody else?

He—Now, you and I—
We've said that to each other—
We've had to say it

For a hundred and seventy years—
And we'll have to say it, always.

She—Say always again!

He—The life of an animate—

She—Say always again!

He—Always!

The life of an animate
Is a procession of deaths
With but a secret sorrowing candle,
Guttering lower and lower,
On the path to the grave—
The life of an inanimate
Is as serenely enduring—
As all still things are.

She—Still things?

He—Recall our childhood in the English museum—

Ere we were moved,
From place to place,
To this dreadful Yankee salon—
Do you remember
That little old Greek tanagra
Of the girl with a head like a bud—
That little old Roman medallion
Of the girl with a head like a—

She—Manikin, Manikin—

Were they so beautiful as I—
Did you love them too—
Why do you bring them back?

He—They were not so beautiful as thou—

I spoke of them—
Recalled, designated them—
Well, because they were ages old—
And—and—

She—And—and?

He—And we might live as long as they—

As they did and do!
I hinted their existence
Because they're not so beautiful as thou,
So that by contrast and deduction—

She—And deduction?

He—You know what I'd say—

She—But say it again!

He—I love you.

She—Manikin?

He—Minikin?

She—Then even though that creature has turned us apart,
Can you see me?

He—I can see you.

She—Even though you haven't seen me
For hours, days, weeks—
With your dear blue eyes—
You can see me—
With your hidden ones?

He—I can see you.

She—Even though you are still,
And calm, and smooth,
And lovely outside—
You aren't still and calm
And smooth and lovely inside?

He—Lovely, yes—

But not still and calm and smooth!

She—Which way are you looking? What do you see?

He—I look at you.

I see you.

She—And if that fool of a servant—

Oh, Manikin—

Suppose she should break the future—

Our great happy centuries ahead—

By dropping me, throwing me down?

He—I should take an immediate step

Off this everlasting shelf—

She—But you cannot move!

He—The good wind would give me a blow!

She—Now you're a punster!

And what would your fragments do?

He—They'd do what Manikin did.

She—Say that again!

He—They'd do what Manikin did. . . .

She—Manikin?

He—Minikin?

She—Shall I tell you something?

He—Tell me something.

She—Are you listening?

He—With my inner ears.

She—I wasn't jealous of that woman—

He—You weren't jealous?

She—I wanted to hear you talk—

He—You wanted to hear me talk?

She—You talk so wonderfully!

He—Do I, indeed? What a booby I am!

She—And I wanted to hear you say—

He—You cheat, you idler, you—

She—Woman—

He—Dissembler!

She—Manikin?

He—Minikin?

She—Everlastingly?

He—Everlastingly.

She—Say it again!

He—I refuse—

She—You refuse?

He—Well—

She—Well?

He—You have ears outside your head—

I'll say that for you—

But they'll never hear—

What your other ears hear!

She—Say it—

Down one of my ears—

Outside my head?

He—I refuse.

She—You refuse?

He—Leave me alone.

She—Manikin?

He—I can't say it!

She—Manikin!

(The clock goes on ticking for a moment. Its mellow chimes strike the hour. Curtain.)

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

Irradiations

I

THE spattering of the rain upon pale terraces
Of afternoon is like the passing of a dream
Amid the roses shuddering 'gainst the wet green stalks
Of the streaming trees—the passing of the wind
Upon the pale lower terraces of my dream
Is like the crinkling of the wet grey robes
Of the hours that come to turn over the urn
Of the day and spill its rainy dream.
Vague movement over the puddled terraces:
Heavy gold pennons—a pomp of solemn gardens
Half hidden under the liquid veil of spring:
Far trumpets like a vague rout of faded roses
Burst 'gainst the wet green silence of distant forests:
A clash of cymbals—then the swift swaying footsteps
Of the wind that undulates along the languid terraces.
Pools of rain—the vacant terraces
Wet, chill and glistening
Towards the sunset beyond the broken doors of to-day.

II

The iridescent vibrations of midsummer light
Dancing, dancing, suddenly flickering and quivering
Like little feet or the movement of quick hands clapping,
Or the rustle of furbelows or the clash of polished gems.
The palpitant mosaic of the midday light
Colliding, sliding, leaping and lingering:
O, I could lie on my back all day,
And mark the mad ballet of the midsummer sky.

III

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

Whirlpools of purple and gold,
Winds from the mountains of cinnabar,
Lacquered mandarin moments, palanquins swaying and balancing
Amid the vermilion pavilions, against the jade balustrades.
Glint of the glittering wings of dragon-flies in the light:
Silver filaments, golden flakes settling downwards,
Rippling, quivering flutters, repulse and surrender,
The sun brodered upon the rain,
The rain rustling with the sun.

Over the roof-tops race the shadows of clouds;
Like horses the shadows of clouds charge down the street.

IV

The balancing of gaudy broad pavilions
Of summer against the insolent breeze:
The bellying of the sides of striped tents,
Swelling taut, shuddering in quick collapse,
Silent under the silence of the sky.

Earth is streaked and spotted
With great splashes and dapples of sunlight:
The sun throws an immense circle of hot light upon the world,
Rolling slowly in ponderous rhythm
Darkly, musically forward.
All is silent under the steep cone of afternoon:
The sky is imperturbably profound.
The ultimate divine union seems about to be accomplished,
All is troubled at the attainment
Of the inexhaustible infinite.

The rolling and the tossing of the sides of immense pavilions
Under the whirling wind that screams up the cloudless sky.

V

Flickering of incessant rain
On flashing pavements:
Sudden scurry of umbrellas:
Bending, recurved blossoms of the storm.

The winds came clanging and clattering
From long white highroads whipping in ribbons up summits:
They strew upon the city gusty wafts of apple-blossom,
And the rustling of innumerable translucent leaves.
Uneven tinkling, the lazy rain
Dripping from the eaves.

VI

The fountain blows its breathless spray
From me to you and back to me.

Whipped, tossed, curdled,
Crashing, quivering:
I hurl kisses like blows upon your lips.
The dance of a bee drunken with sunlight:
Irradiant ecstasies, white and gold,
Sigh and relapse.

The fountain tosses pallid spray
Far in the sorrowful, silent sky.

VII

The trees, like great jade elephants,
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants:
The clouds are their crimson howdah-canopies,

The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah.
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those trees.

VIII

Brown bed of earth, still fresh and warm with love,
Now hold me tight:
Broad field of sky, where the clouds laughing move,
Fill up my pores with light:
You trees, now talk to me, chatter and scold or weep,
Or drowsing stand:
You winds, now play with me, you wild things creep,
You boulders, bruise my hand!
I now am yours and you are mine: it matters not
What gods herein I see:
You grow in me, I am rooted to this spot,
We drink and pass the cup, immortally.

IX

O seeded grass, you army of little men
Crawling up the long slope with quivering, quick blades of steel:
You who storm millions of graves, tiny green tentacles of earth,
Interlace yourselves tightly over my heart,
And do not let me go:
For I would lie here forever and watch with one eye
The pilgrimaging ants in your dull, savage jungles,
The while with the other I see the stiff lines of the slope
Break in mid-air, a wave surprisingly arrested,
And above them, wavering, dancing, bodiless, colourless, unreal,
The long thin lazy fingers of the heat.

X

To-day you shall have but little song from me,
For I belong to the sunlight.
This I would not barter for any kingdom.

I am a wheeling swallow,
Blue all over is my delight.
I am a drowsy grass-blade
In the greenest shadow.

Blue Symphony

I

THE darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud.
The sun comes forth upon earth.

Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken:
And in the walks is water.

Sombre wreck—autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow-branch that is broken.

Oh, old pagodas of my soul, how you glittered across green trees!
Blue and cool:
Blue, tremulously,
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools.
The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

II

Through the upland meadows
I go alone.

For I dreamed of someone last night
Who is waiting for me.

Flower and blossom, tell me, do you know of her?

Have the rocks hidden her voice?
They are very blue and still.

Long upward road that is leading me,
Light hearted I quit you,
For the long loose ripples of the meadow-grass
Invite me to dance upon them.

Quivering grass
Daintily poised
For her foot's tripping.
Oh, blown clouds, could I only race up like you,
Oh, the last slopes that are sun-drenched and steep!

Look, the sky!
Across black valleys
Rise blue-white aloft
Jagged unwrinkled mountains, ranges of death.

Solitude. Silence.

III

One chuckles by the brook for me:
One rages under the stone.
One makes a spout of his mouth.
One whispers—one is gone.

One over there on the water
Spreads cold ripples
For me
Enticingly.

The vast dark trees
Flow like blue veils
Of tears
Into the water.
Sour sprites,
Moaning and chuckling,
What have you hidden from me?

"In the palace of the blue stone she lies forever
Bound hand and foot."

Was it the wind
That rattled the reeds together?
Dry reeds,
A faint shiver in the grasses.

IV

On the left hand there is a temple:
And a palace on the right-hand side.
Foot passengers in scarlet
Pass over the glittering tide.

Under the bridge
The old river flows
Low and monotonous
Day after day.

I have heard and have seen
All the news that has been:
Autumn's gold and Spring's green!

Now in my palace
I see foot passengers
Crossing the river:
Pilgrims of autumn
In the afternoons.

Lotus pools:
Petals in the water.
These are my dreams.

For me silks are outspread.
I take my ease, unthinking.

V

And now the lowest pine-branch
Is drawn across the disc of the sun.
Old friends who will forget me soon,
I must go on,
Towards those blue death-mountains
I have forgot so long.

In the marsh grasses
There lies forever
My last treasure,
With the hopes of my heart.
The ice is glazing over,
Torn lanterns flutter,
On the leaves is snow.
In the frosty evening
Toll the old bell for me
Once, in the sleepy temple.

Perhaps my soul will hear.

Afterglow:
Before the stars peep
I shall creep out into darkness.

White Symphony

I

FORLORN and white,
Whorls of purity about a golden chalice,
Immense the peonies
Flare and shatter their petals over my face.

They slowly turn paler,
They seem to be melting like blue-grey flakes of ice,
Thin greyish shivers
Fluctuating 'mid the dark green lance-thrust of the leaves.

Like snowballs tossed,
Like soft white butterflies,
The peonies poise in the twilight.
And their narcotic insinuating perfume
Draws me into them
Shivering with the coolness,
Aching with the void.
They kiss the blue chalice of my dreams
Like a gesture seen for an instant and then lost forever.

. . .

Outwards the petals
Thrust to embrace me,
Pale daggers of coldness
Run through my aching breast.

Outwards, still outwards,
Till on the brink of twilight
They swirl downwards silently,
Flurry of snow in the void.

Outwards, still outwards,
Till the blue walls are hidden,

And in the blinding white radiance
Of a whirlpool of clouds, I awake.

• •
•

Like spraying rockets
My peonies shower
Their glories on the night.
Wavering perfumes,
Drift about the garden;
Shadows of the moonlight,
Drift and ripple over the dew-gemmed leaves.

Soar, crash, and sparkle,
Shoal of stars drifting
Like silver fishes,
Through the black sluggish boughs.
Towards the impossible,
Towards the inaccessible,
Towards the ultimate,
Towards the silence,
Towards the eternal,
These blossoms go.

The peonies spring like rockets in the twilight,
And out of them all I rise.

II

Downwards through the blue abyss it slides,
The white snow-water of my dreams,
Downwards crashing from slippery rock
Into the boiling chasm:
In which no eye dare look, for it is the chasm of death.
Upwards from the blue abyss it rises,
The chill water-mist of my dreams;
Upwards to greyish weeping pines,
And to skies of autumn ever about my heart,
It is blue at the beginning,

And blue-white against the grey-greenness;
It wavers in the upper air,
Catching unconscious sparkles, a rainbow-glint of sunlight,
And fading in the sad depths of the sky.

Outwards rush the strong pale clouds,
Outwards and ever outwards;
The blue-grey clouds indistinguishable one from another:
Nervous, sinewy, tossing their arms and brandishing,
Till on the blue serrations of the horizon
They drench with their black rain a great peak of changeless
snow.

. . .
.

As evening came on, I climbed the tower,
To gaze upon the city far beneath:
I was not weary of days; but in the evening
A white mist assembled and gathered over the earth
And blotted it from sight.
But to escape :
To chase with the golden clouds galloping over the horizon:
Arrows of the northwest wind
Singing amid them,
Ruffling up my hair!

As evening came on the distance altered,
Pale wavering reflections rose from out the city,
Like sighs or the beckoning of half-invisible hands.
Monotonously and sluggishly they crept upwards
A river that had spent itself in some chasm,
And dwindled and foamed at last at my weary feet.

Autumn! Golden fountains,
And the winds neighing
Amid the monotonous hills:
Desolation of the old gods,
Rain that lifts and rain that moves away;
In the green-black torrent
Scarlet leaves.

It was now perfectly evening:
And the tower loomed like a gaunt peak in mid-air
Above the city: its base was utterly lost.
It was slowly coming on to rain,
And the immense columns of white mist
Wavered and broke before the faint-hurled spears.

I will descend the mountains like a shepherd,
And in the folds of tumultuous misty cities,
I will put all my thoughts, all my old thoughts, safely to sleep.
For it is already autumn,
O whiteness of the pale southwestern sky!
O wavering dream that was not mine to keep!

In midnight, in mournful moonlight,
By paths I could not trace,
I walked in the white garden,
Each flower had a white face.

Their perfume intoxicated me: thus I began my dream.

I was alone; I had no one to guide me,
But the moon was like the sun:
It stooped and kissed each waxen petal,
One after one.
Green and white was that garden: diamond rain hung in the
branches,
You will not believe it!

In the morning, at the dayspring,
I wakened, shivering; lo,
The white garden that blossomed at my feet
Was a garden hidden in snow.

It was my sorrow to see that all this was a dream.

III

Blue, clogged with purple,
Mists uncoil themselves:
Sparkling to the horizon,
I see the snow alone.

In the deep blue chasm,
Boats sleep under gold thatch;
Icicle-like trees fret
Faintly rose-touched sky.

Under their heaped snow-eaves,
Leaden houses shiver.
Through thin blue crevasses,
Trickles an icy stream.

The pines groan white-laden,
The waves shiver, struck by the wind;
Beyond from treeless horizons,
Broken snow-peaks crawl to the sea.

. . .

Wearily the snow glares,
Through the grey silence, day after day,
Mocking the colourless cloudless sky
With the reflection of death.

There is no smoke through the pine tops,
No strong red boatmen in pale green reeds,
No herons to flicker an instant,
No lanterns to glow with gay ray.

No sails beat up to the harbour,
With creaking cordage and sailors' song.
Somnolent, bare-poled, indifferent,
They sleep, and the city sleeps.

Mid-winter about them casts
Its dreary fortifications:
Each day is a gaunt grey rock,
And death is the last of them all.

. . .
.

Over the sluggish snow,
Drifts now a pallid weak shower of bloom:
Boredom of fresh creation,
Death-weariness of old returns.

White, white blossom,
Fall of the shattered cups day on day:
Is there anything here that is not ancient,
That has not bloomed a thousand years ago?

Under the glare of the white-hot day,
Under the restless wind-rakes of the winter,
White blossom or white snow scattered,
And beneath them, dark, the graves.

Dark graves never changing,
White dream, drifting, never changing above them:
O that the white scroll of heaven might be rolled up,
And the naked red lightning thrust at the smouldering earth!

,

H. D.

At Baia

II SHOULD have thought
In a dream you would have brought
Some lovely perilous thing,
Orchids piled in a great sheath,
As who would say (in a dream)

I send you this,
Who left the blue veins
Of your throat unkissed.

Why was it that your hands
(That never took mine)
Your hands that I could see
Drift over the orchid heads
So carefully,
Your hands, so fragile, sure to lift
So gently, the fragile flower stuff—
Ah, ah, how was it

You never sent (in a dream)
The very form, the very scent,
Not heavy, not sensuous,
But perilous—perilous—
Of orchids, piled in a great sheath,
And folded underneath on a bright scroll
Some word:

Flower sent to flower;
For white hands, the lesser white,
Less lovely of flower leaf,

Or

Lover to lover, no kiss,
No touch, but forever and ever this.

Not Honey

NOT honey,
Not the plunder of the bee
From meadow or sand-flower
Or mountain bush;

From winter-flower or shoot
Born of the later heat:
Not honey, not the sweet
Stain on the lips and teeth:
Not honey, not the deep
Plunge of soft belly
And the clinging of the gold-edged
Pollen-dusted feet.

Not so—
Though rapture blind my eyes,
And hunger crisp
Dark and inert my mouth,
Not honey, not the south,
Not the tall stalk
Of red twin-lilies,
Nor light branch of fruit tree
Caught in flexible light branch.

Not honey, not the south;
Ah, flower of purple iris,
Flower of white,
Or of the iris, withering the grass—
For fleck of the sun's fire,
Gathers such heat and power,
That shadow-print is light,
Cast through the petals
Of the yellow iris flower.

Not iris—old desire—old passion—
Old forgetfulness—old pain—
Not this, nor any flower,
But if you turn again,
Seek strength of arm and throat,
Touch as the god:
Neglect the lyre-note;
Knowing that you shall feel,
About the frame,

No trembling of the string
But heat more passionate
Of bone and the white shell
And fiery tempered steel.

Song

YOU are as gold
As the half-ripe grain
That merges to gold again,
As white as the white rain
That beats through
The half-opened flowers
Of the great flower tufts
Thick on the black limbs
Of an Illyrian apple bough.

Can honey distil such fragrance
As your bright hair—
For your face is as fair as rain,
Yet as rain that lies clear
On white honey-comb,
Lends radiance to the white wax,
So your hair on your brow
Casts light for a shadow.

The Garden

I

YOU are clear,
O rose, cut in rock.

I could scrape the colour
From the petals,
Like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree,
I could break you.

II

O wind, rend open the heat,
Cut apart the heat,
Slit it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
Through this thick air;
Fruit cannot fall into heat
That presses up and blunts
The points of pears,
And rounds grapes.

Cut the heat;
Plough through it,
Turning it on either side
Of your path.

MARIANNE MOORE

The Monkeys

WINKED too much and were afraid of snakes. The
zebras, supreme in
their abnormality; the elephants with their fog-coloured skin
and strictly practical appendages

were there, the small cats; and the parakeet—
trivial and humdrum on examination, destroying
bark and portions of the food it could not eat.

I recall their magnificence, now not more magnificent
than it is dim. It is difficult to recall the ornament,
speech, and precise manner of what one might
call the minor acquaintances twenty
years back; but I shall not forget him—that Gilgamesh
among
the hairy carnivora—that cat with the

wedge-shaped, slate-gray marks on its forelegs and the resolute
tail,
asttringently remarking, "They have imposed on us with their
pale
half-fledged protestations, trembling about
in inarticulate frenzy, saying
it is not for us to understand art; finding it
all so difficult, examining the thing

as if it were inconceivably arcanic, as symmet-
rically frigid as if it had been carved out of chrysoprase
or marble—strict with tension, malignant
in its power over us and deeper
than the sea when it proffers flattery in exchange for
hemp,
rye, flax, horses, platinum, timber, and fur.'

The Fish

WADE
through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps
adjusting the ash-heaps:
opening and shutting itself like

an

injured fan.

The barnacles which encrust the side
of the wave, cannot hide
there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,

split like spun

glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness
into the crevices—
in and out, illuminating

the

turquoise sea

of bodies. The water drives a wedge
of iron through the iron edge
of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

pink

rice-grains, ink

bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like green
lilies, and submarine
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All

external

marks of abuse are present on this
defiant edifice—
all the physical features of

ac-

cident—lack

of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
hatchet strokes, these things stand
out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.

Repeated

evidence has proved that it can live
on what cannot revive
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

Poetry

II, TOO, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what

we cannot understand: the bat

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician—

nor is it valid

to discriminate against 'business documents and

school-books'; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

'literalists of

the imagination'—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

His Shield

The pin-swin or spine-swine
(the edgehog miscalled hedgehog) with
all his edges out,
echidna and echinoderm in distressed-
pincushion thorn-fur coats,
the spiny pig or porcupine,
the rhino with horned snout,—
everything is battle-dressed.

Pig-fur won't do, I'll wrap
myself in salamander-skin
like Presbyter John.
A lizard in the midst of flames, a firebrand
that is life, asbestos-
eyed asbestos-eared with tattooed nap
and permanent pig on
the instep; he can withstand

fire and won't drown. In his
unconquerable country of
unpompous gusto,
gold was so common none considered it; greed
and flattery were
unknown. Though rubies large as tennis-
balls conjoined in streams so
that the mountain seemed to bleed,

the inextinguishable
salamander styled himself but
presbyter. His shield
was his humility. In Carpasian

linen coat, flanked by his
household lion-cubs and sable
retinue, he revealed
a formula safer than

an armorer's: the power of relinquishing
what one would keep; that is freedom.

Become dinosaur-
skulled, quilled or salamander-wooled, more ironshod
and javelin-dressed than
a hedgehog battalion of steel; but be
dull. Don't be envied or
armed with a measuring-rod.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

Continent's End

AT the equinox when the earth was veiled in a late rain,
wreathed with wet poppies, waiting spring,
The ocean swelled for a far storm and beat its boundary, the
ground-swell shook the beds of granite.

I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray, the established
sea-marks, felt behind me
Mountain and plain, the immense breadth of the continent, be-
fore me the mass and doubled stretch of water.

I said: You yoke the Aleutian seal-rocks with the lava and coral
sowings that flower the south,
Over your flood the life that sought the sunrise faces ours that
has followed the evening star.

The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to you,
you have forgotten us, mother.

You were much younger when we crawled out of the womb and
lay in the sun's eye on the tideline.

It was long and long ago; we have grown proud since then and
you have grown bitter; life retains

Your mobile soft unquiet strength; and envies hardness, the
insolent quietness of stone.

The tides are in our veins, we still mirror the stars, life is your
child, but there is in me

Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye that
watched before there was an ocean.

That watched you fill your beds out of the condensation of thin
vapor and watched you change them,

That saw you soft and violent wear your boundaries down, eat
rock, shift places with the continents.

Mother, though my song's measure is like your surf-beat's ancient
rhythm I never learned it of you.

Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our
tones flow from the older fountain.

Birds

THE fierce musical cries of a couple of sparrow hawks
hunting on the headland,
Hovering and darting, their heads northwestward,
Prick like silver arrows shot through a curtain the noise of the
ocean

Trampling its granite; their red backs gleam

Under my window around the stone corners; nothing grace-
fuller, nothing

Nimbler in the wind. Westward the wave-gleaners,

The old gray sea-going gulls are gathered together, the north-
west wind wakening

Their wings to the wild spirals of the wind-dance.
Fresh as the air, salt as the foam, play birds in the bright wind,
fly falcons
Forgetting the oak and the pinewood, come gulls
From the Carmel sands and the sands at the river-mouth, from
Lobos and out of the limitless
Power of the mass of the sea, for a poem
Needs multitude, multitudes of thoughts, all fierce, all flesh-
eaters, musically clamorous
Bright hawks that hover and dart headlong, and ungainly
Gray hunger fleged with desire of transgression, salt slimed
beaks, from the sharp
Rock-shores of the world and the secret waters.

Love the Wild Swan

“**I** HATE my verses, every line, every word.
Oh pale and brittle pencils ever to try
One grass-blade's curve, or the throat of one bird
That clings to twig, ruffled against white sky.
Oh cracked and twilight mirrors ever to catch
One color, one glinting flash, of the splendor of things.
Unlucky hunter, Oh bullets of wax,
The lion beauty, the wild-swan wings, the storm of the wings.”
—This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game.
Better bullets than yours would miss the white breast,
Better mirrors than yours would crack in the flame.
Does it matter whether you hate your . . . self? At least
Love your eyes that can see, your mind that can
Hear the music, the thunder of the wings. Love the wild swan.

Apology for Bad Dreams

I

IN the purple light, heavy with redwood, the slopes drop seaward,
Headlong convexities of forest, drawn in together to the steep ravine. Below, on the sea-cliff,
A lonely clearing; a little field of corn by the streamside; a roof under spared trees. Then the ocean
Like a great stone someone has cut to a sharp edge and polished to shining. Beyond it, the fountain
And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk sun.
In the little clearing a woman
Is punishing a horse; she had tied the halter to a sapling at the edge of the wood, but when the great whip
Clung to the flanks the creature kicked so hard she feared he would snap the halter; she called from the house
The young man her son; who fetched a chain tie-rope, they working together
Noosed the small rusty links round the horse's tongue
And tied him by the swollen tongue to the tree.
Seen from this height they are shrunk to insect size.
Out of all human relation. You cannot distinguish
The blood dripping from where the chain is fastened,
The beast shuddering; but the thrust neck and the legs
Far apart. You can see the whip fall on the flanks . . .
The gesture of the arm. You cannot see the face of the woman.
The enormous light beats up out of the west across the cloud-bars of the trade-wind. The ocean
Darkens, the high clouds brighten, the hills darken together.
Unbridled and unbelievable beauty
Covers the evening world . . . not covers, grows apparent out of it, as Venus down there grows out
From the lit sky. What said the prophet? "I create good: and
I create evil: I am the Lord."

II

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
(The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite
cliff the gaunt cypresses crown
Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what
Titan? The hills like pointed flames
Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the
sun, what immolation?)
This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and
like the passionate spirit of humanity
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths, the
horrible transfigurements: I said in my heart,
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place." And I said,
"Burn sacrifices once a year to magic
Horror away from the house, this little house here
You have built over the ocean with your own hands
Beside the standing boulders: for what are we,
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more liable
Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanities of desire;
not accidents but essential,
And crowd up from the core:" I imagined victims for those
wolves, I made them phantoms to follow,
They have hunted the phantoms and missed the house. It is not
good to forget over what gulfs the spirit
Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower blown
seaward by the night-wind, floats to its quietness.

III

Boulders blunted like an old bear's teeth break up from the
headland; below them
All the soil is thick with shells, the tide-rock feasts of a dead
people.

Here the granite flanks are scarred with ancient fire, the ghosts
of the tribe
Crouch in the nights beside the ghost of a fire, they try to re-
member the sunlight,
Light has died out of their skies. These have paid something for
the future
Luck of the country, while we living keep old griefs in memory.
though God's
Envy is not a likely fountain of ruin, to forget evils calls down
Sudden reminders from the cloud: remembered deaths be our
redeemers;
Imagined victims our salvation: white as the half moon at mid-
night
Someone flamelike passed me, saying, "I am Tamar Cauldwell,
I have my desire,"
Then the voice of the sea returned, when she had gone by, the
stars to their towers.
. . . Beautiful country burn again, Point Pinos down to the Sur
Rivers
Burn as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and the
Carmel water.

IV

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who invents
victims, is only the ape of that God.
He washes it out with tears and many waters, calcines it with
fire in the red crucible,
Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the spirit flies out and
stands naked, he sees the spirit,
He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his hand, the atom
is broken, the power that massed it
Cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have come home to
myself, behold me.
I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me
In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth,
Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments,

And here am I moving the stars that are me."
I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason
For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.
He being sufficient might be still. I think they admit no reason;
they are the ways of my love.
Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft: no
thought apparent but burns darkly
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault: no
thought outside: a certain measure in phenomena:
The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland,
the ever-returning roses of dawn.

MARSDEN HARTLEY

Warblers

AN hundred warblers in the nearest aching gap,
it seems as though it loved its aching
filled with hyper-ikonistic misery.
I did not expect such staggering wealth
to come to me by dawn-delivered stealth,
though morning is the time—and spring
the way love knows of its best being.

All through the leaves a burning
rush of gilded, swift, whirling wing.
All warblers of the world have come
to me, and are in me living—
I only cool retreat and humble shade
giving,
my leaves with excess of sun
trampled.

I said an hundred warblers came
to me,
and now that I am clear, what it
was, was very near—
it was but two, or three,
But—how they fastened me.

Indian Point

WHEN the surf licks with its tongues
these volcanic personal shapes, which we,
defining for ourselves as rocks, accept
them as such, at its feverish incoming—
isn't it too, in its way, something like
the plain image of life?
Those restless entities disturbing solid
substances with a curious, irrelevant,
common fret—
and, like so many simple looking elements, when
they seem the most playful, it is then that
they are most dangerous.
The bright woman looking out to sea
through the crisp telescope of her advancing
years,
there is no doubt but that she discovers the
same image as the child, who remarks the
radiant glint of his marbles on the top spray
of the wave he once played with,
or as the fringed lace on the dress of a
Titan's wife—
the inwash cooling at least the eye with
a something exceptional white or green or
blue, too pale almost to mention, if
frightening to the marrow,
for many have been sent to their death trusting
too much while regarding it affectionately,
the sea.

T. S. ELIOT

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

LET us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question. . . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep,

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

.

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .
I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in
upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That was not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along
the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant at all."

.

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Portrait of a Lady

*Thou hast committed—
Fornication: but that was in another country,
And besides, the wench is dead.*

“The Jew of Malta.”

I

AMONG the smoke and fog of a December afternoon
You have the scene arrange itself—as it will seem to do—
With “I have saved this afternoon for you”;
And four wax candles in the darkened room,
Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,
An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb
Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.
We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole
Transmit the Preludes, through his hair and finger-tips.
“So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.”
—And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets
Mingled with remote cornets
And begins.

"You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,
(For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind:
How keen you are!)
To find a friend who has these qualities,
Who has, and gives
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
How much it means that I say this to you—
Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar*!"
Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
Of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,
Capricious monotone
That is at least one definite "false note."
—Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,
Admire the monuments,
Discuss the late events,
Correct our watches by the public clocks,
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks.

II

Now that lilacs are in bloom
She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
"Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands";
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalks)
"You let it flow from you, you let it flow,
And youth is cruel, and has no remorse
And smiles at situations which it cannot see."
I smile, of course,
And go on drinking tea.

"Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
To be wonderful and youthful, after all."

The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune
Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:
"I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.
You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel.
You will go on, and when you have prevailed
You can say: at this point many a one has failed.
But what have I, but what have I, my friend,
To give you, what can you receive from me?
Only the friendship and the sympathy
Of one about to reach her journey's end.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends . . ."

I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends
For what she has said to me?

You will see me any morning in the park
Reading the comics and the sporting page.
Particularly I remark
An English countess goes upon the stage.
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,
Another bank defaulter has confessed.
I keep my countenance,
I remain self-possessed
Except when a street piano, mechanical and tired
Reiterates some worn-out common song
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden
Recalling things that other people have desired.
Are these ideas right or wrong?

III

The October night comes down; returning as before,
Except for a slight sensation of being ill at ease,
I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

"And so you are going abroad; and when do you return?
But that's a useless question.
You hardly know when you are coming back,
You will find so much to learn."
My smile falls heavily among the bric-à-brac.
"Perhaps you can write to me."
My self-possession flares up for a second;
This is as I had reckoned.
"I have been wondering frequently of late
(But our beginnings never know our ends)
Why we have not developed into friends."
I feel like one who smiles, and turning shall remark
Suddenly, his expression in a glass.
My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark.

"For everybody said so, all our friends,
They were all sure our feelings would relate
So closely! I myself can hardly understand.
We must leave it now to fate.
You will write at any rate.
Perhaps it is not too late.
I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."

And I must borrow every changing shape
To find expression . . . dance, dance
Like a dancing bear,
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance—

Well! and what if she should die some afternoon,
Afternoon grey and smoky, evening yellow and rose;

Should die and leave me sitting pen in hand
 With the smoke coming down above the housetops;
 Doubtful, for quite a while
 Not knowing what to feel or if I understand
 Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon . . .
 Would she not have the advantage, after all?
 This music is successful, with a "dying fall"
 Now that we talk of dying—
 And should I have the right to smile?

Sweeney Among the Nightingales

ὦμοι πέπληγμαι καιρίαν πληγὴν ἔσω.

*Why should I speak of the nightingale? The nightingale sings
 of adulterous wrong.*

APENECK SWEENEY spreads his knees
 Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
 The zebra stripes along his jaw
 Swelling to maculate giraffe.

The circles of the stormy moon
 Slide westward to the River Plate,
 Death and the Raven drift above
 And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.

Gloomy Orion and the Dog
 Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;
 The person in the Spanish cape
 Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth
 Overturns a coffee cup,
 Reorganized upon the floor
 She yawns and draws a stocking up;

The silent man in mocha brown
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;
The waiter brings in oranges
Bananas, figs and hot-house grapes;

The silent vertebrate exhales,
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
Rachel *née* Rabinovitch
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape
Are suspect, thought to be in league;
Therefore the man with heavy eyes
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wistaria
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct
Converses at the door apart,
The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

Whispers of Immortality

WEBSTER was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures underground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another
Who found no substitute for sense
To seize and clutch and penetrate,
Expert beyond experience.

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

Grishkin is nice; her Russian eye
Is underlined for emphasis;
Uncorseted, her friendly bust
Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

The couched Brazilian jaguar
Compels the scampering marmoset
With subtle effluence of cat;
Grishkin has a maisonette:

The sleek and sinuous jaguar
Does not in his arboreal gloom
Distil so rank a feline smell
As Grishkin in a drawing-room

And even abstracter entities
Circumambulate her charm;
But our lot crawls between dry ribs
To keep its metaphysics warm.

Gerontion

*Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.*

HERE I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.
Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger.

In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas,
To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers; by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands, at Limoges
Who walked all night in the next room;

By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians;
By Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room
Shifting the candles; Fraulein von Kulp
Who turned in the hall, one hand on the door. Vacant shuttle
Weave the wind. I have no ghosts,

An old man in a draughty house
Under a windy knob.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late
What's not believed in, or if still believed,
In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
Till the refusal propagates a fear. Think
Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices
Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues
Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.
These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree.

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours. Think at last
We have not reached conclusion, when I
Stiffen in a rented house. Think at last
I have not made this show purposelessly
And it is not by any concitation
Of the backward devils.
I would meet you upon this honestly.
I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
How should I use it for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit, of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil

Delay? De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammell, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms. Gull against the wind, in the windy straits
Of Belle Isle, or running on the Horn,
White feathers in the snow, the Gulf claims,
And an old man driven by the Trades
To a sleepy corner.

Tenants of the house,
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

The Hollow Men

A penny for the Old Guy.

I

WE are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind and dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer—
Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom

III

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness

Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.

V

*Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear, prickly pear
Here we go round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.*

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow
For Thine is the Kingdom.

Between the conception
 And the creation
 Between the emotion
 And the response
 Falls the Shadow

Life is very long.

Between the desire
 And the spasm
 Between the potency
 And the existence
 Between the essence
 And the descent
 Falls the Shadow.

For Thine is the Kingdom.

For Thine is
 Life is
 For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 Not with a bang but a whimper.*

Animula

‘ISSUES from the hand of God, the simple soul’
 To a flat world of changing lights and noise,
 To light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm;
 Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,
 Rising or falling, grasping at kisses and toys,
 Advancing boldly, sudden to take alarm,
 Retreating to the corner of arm and knee,
 Eager to be reassured, taking pleasure
 In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,
 Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;

Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor
 And running stags around a silver tray;
 Confounds the actual and the fanciful,
 Content with playing-cards and kings and queens,
 What the fairies do and what the servants say.
 The heavy burden of the growing soul
 Perplexes and offends more, day by day;
 Week by week, offends and perplexes more
 With the imperatives of 'is and seems'
 And may and may not, desire and control.
 The pain of living and the drug of dreams
 Curl up the small soul in the window seat
 Behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.
 Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
 Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
 Unable to fare forward or retreat,
 Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,
 Denying the importunity of the blood,
 Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,
 Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;
 Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,
 For Boudin, blown to pieces,
 For this one who made a great fortune,
 And that one who went his own way.
 Pray for Floret, by the boarhound slain between the yew trees,
 Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

Marina

Quis hic locus, quae regio, quae mundi plaga?

WHAT seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands
 What water lapping the bow
 And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog
 What images return
 O my daughter.

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning

Death

Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning

Death

Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning

Death

Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning

Death

Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,

A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog

By this grace dissolved in place

What is this face, less clear and clearer

The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—

Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet

Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.

I made this, I have forgotten

And remember.

The rigging weak and the canvas rotten

Between one June and another September.

Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own.

The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.

This form, this face, this life

Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me

Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,

The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

What seas what shores what granite islands towards my timbers

And woodthrush calling through the fog

My daughter.

Ash Wednesday

I

BECAUSE I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
(Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)
Why should I mourn
The vanished power of the usual reign?

Because I do not hope to know again
The infirm glory of the positive hour
Because I do not think
Because I know I shall not know
The one veritable transitory power
Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing
again

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us
And I pray that I may forget
These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer

For what is done, not to be done again
May the judgment not be too heavy upon us

Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death
Pray for us now and at the hour of our death.

II

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said
Shall these bones live? shall these
Bones live? And that which had been contained
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:
Because of the goodness of this Lady
And because of her loveliness, and because
She honours the Virgin in meditation,
We shine with brightness. And I who am here dissembled
Proffer my deeds to oblivion, and my love
To the posterity of the desert and the fruit of the gourd.
It is this which recovers
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions
Which the leopards reject. The Lady is withdrawn
In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown.
Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness.
There is no life in them. As I am forgotten
And would be forgotten, so I would forget
Thus devoted, concentrated in purpose. And God said
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only
The wind will listen. And the bones sang chirping
With the burden of the grasshopper, saying

'Lady of silences
Calm and distressed
Torn and most whole
Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
Exhausted and life-giving
Worried reposeful
The single Rose
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied
End of the endless
Journey to no end
Conclusion of all that
Is inconclusible
Speech without word and
Word of no speech
Grace to the Mother
For the Garden
Where all love ends.

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand,
Forgetting themselves and each other, united
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

III

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below
The same shape twisted on the banister
Under the vapour in the fetid air

Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.

At the second turning of the second stair
I left them twisting, turning below;
There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair,
Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark.

At the first turning of the third stair
Was a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
Lilac and brown hair;
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over
the third stair,
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair.

Lord, I am not worthy
Lord, I am not worthy

but speak the word only.

IV

Who walked between the violet and the violet
Who walked between
The various ranks of varied green
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour,
Talking of trivial things
In ignorance and in knowledge of eternal dolour
Who moved among the others as they walked,
Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs
Made cool the dry rock and made firm the sand
In blue of larkspur, blue of Mary's colour,
Sovegna vos

Here are the years that walk between, bearing
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring
One who moves in the time between sleep and waking, wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.
The new years walk, restoring
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
The time. Redeem
The unread vision in the higher dream
While jewelled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.
The silent sister veiled in white and blue
Between the yews, behind the garden god,
Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but spoke no
word

But the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down
Redeem the time, redeem the dream
The token of the word unheard, unspoken

Till the wind shake a thousand whispers from the yew

And after this our exile

V

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word, the Word within
The world and for the world;
And the light shone in darkness and
Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Where shall the word be found, where will the word
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence
Not on the sea or on the islands, not
On the mainland, in the desert or the rain land,
For those who walk in darkness
Both in the day time and in the night time
The right time and the right place are not here
No place of grace for those who avoid the face
No time to rejoice for those who walk among noise and deny the
voice

Will the veiled sister pray for
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee,
Those who are torn on the horn between season and season, time
and time, between
Hour and hour, word and word, power and power, those who
wait
In darkness? Will the veiled sister pray
For children at the gate
Who will not go away and cannot pray:
Pray for those who chose and oppose

O my people, what have I done unto thee.

Will the veiled sister between the slender
Yew trees pray for those who offend her
And are terrified and cannot surrender
And affirm before the world and deny between the rocks
In the last desert between the last blue rocks
The desert in the garden the garden in the desert
Of drouth, spitting from the mouth the withered apple-seed.

O my people.

VI

Although I do not hope to turn again
Although I do not hope
Although I do not hope to turn

Wavering between the profit and the loss
In this brief transit where the dreams cross
The dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying
(Bless me father) though I do not wish to wish these things
From the wide window towards the granite shore
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
Unbroken wings

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell
Quickens to recover
The cry of quail and the whirling plover
And the blind eye creates
The empty forms between the ivory gates
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth

This is the time of tension between dying and birth
The place of solitude where three dreams cross
Between blue rocks
But when the voices shaken from the yew-tree drift away
Let the other yew be shaken and reply.

Blessèd sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain spirit of the
garden,
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.

Burnt Norton

τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ
ὥς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

l. p. 77. Fr. 2.

ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡυτή.

l. p. 89. Fr. 60.

Diels: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Herakleitos).

I

TIME present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.

There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

II

Garlic and sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
The trilling wire in the blood
Sings below inveterate scars
And reconciles forgotten wars.
The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf

And hear upon the sodden floor
 Below, the boarhound and the boar
 Pursue their pattern as before
 But reconciled among the stars.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity.
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from
 nor towards,
 Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
 I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
 And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

The inner freedom from the practical desire,
 The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
 And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
 By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
 Without elimination, both a new world
 And the old made explicit, understood
 In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
 The resolution of its partial horror.
 Yet the enchainment of past and future
 Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
 Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
 Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future

Allow but a little consciousness.
 To be conscious is not to be in time
 But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
 The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
 The moment in the draughty church at smoke-fall
 Be remembered; involved with past and future.
 Only through time time is conquered.

III

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.
Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney.
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Dessication of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement; while the world moves
In appetency, on its metallated ways
Of time past and time future.

IV

Time and the bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.

V

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.
Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,
Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always—
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.

JOHN CROWE RANSOM

Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter

THERE was such speed in her little body,
And such lightness in her footfall,
It is no wonder that her brown study
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.
We looked among orchard trees and beyond,
Where she took arms against her shadow,
Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud
Dripping their snow on the green grass,

Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little
Lady with rod that made them rise
From their noon apple-dreams, and scuttle
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready;
In one house we are sternly stopped
To say we are vexed at her brown study,
Lying so primly propped.

Lady Lost

THIS morning, there flew up the lane
A timid lady-bird to our bird-bath
And eyed her image dolefully as death;
This afternoon, knocked on our windowpane
To be let in from the rain.

And when I caught her eye
She looked aside, but at the clapping thunder
And sight of the whole earth blazing up like tinder
Looked in on us again most miserably,
Indeed as if she would cry.

So I will go out into the park and say,
"Who has lost a delicate brown-eyed lady
In the West End Section? Or has anybody
Injured some fine woman in some dark way,
Last night or yesterday?"

"Let the owner come and claim possession,
No questions will be asked. But stroke her gently
With loving words, and she will evidently
Resume her full soft-haired white-breasted fashion,
And her right home and her right passion."

Blue Girls

TWIRLING your blue skirts, traveling the sward
Under the towers of your seminary,
Go listen to your teachers old and contrary
Without believing a word.

Tie the white fillets then about your lustrous hair
And think no more of what will come to pass
Than bluebirds that go walking on the grass
And chattering on the air.

Practice your beauty, blue girls, before it fail;
And I will cry with my loud lips and publish
Beauty which all our power shall never establish,
It is so frail.

For I could tell you a story which is true:
I know a lady with a terrible tongue,
Blear eyes fallen from blue,
All her perfections tarnished—and yet it is not long
Since she was lovelier than any of you.

Here Lies a Lady

HERE lies a lady of beauty and high degree.
Of chills and fever she died, of fever and chills,
The delight of her husband, her aunts, an infant of three,
And of medicos marveling sweetly on her ills.

For either she burned, and her confident eyes would blaze,
And her fingers fly in a manner to puzzle their heads—
What was she making? Why, nothing; she sat in a maze
Of old scraps of laces, snipped into curious shreds—

Or this would pass, and the light of her fire decline
Till she lay discouraged and cold as a thin stalk white and blown,

And would not open her eyes, to kisses, to wine.
The sixth of these states was her last; the cold settled down.

Sweet ladies, long may ye bloom, and toughly I hope ye may thole,
But was she not lucky? In flowers and lace and mourning,
In love and great honor we bade God rest her soul
After six little spaces of chill, and six of burning.

Captain Carpenter

CAPTAIN CARPENTER rose up in his prime
Put on his pistols and went riding out
But had got well nigh nowhere at that time
Till he fell in with ladies in a rout.

It was a pretty lady and all her train
That played with him so sweetly but before
An hour she'd taken a sword with all her main
And twined him of his nose for evermore.

Captain Carpenter mounted up one day
And rode straight way into a stranger rogue
That looked unchristian but be that as it may
The Captain did not wait upon prologue.

But drew upon him out of his great heart
The other swung against him with a club
And cracked his two legs at the shinny part
And let him roll and stick like any tub.

Captain Carpenter rode many a time
From male and female took he sundry harms
He met the wife of Satan crying "I'm
The she-wolf bids you shall bear no more arms."

Their strokes and counters whistled in the wind
I wish he had delivered half his blows

But where she should have made off like a hind
The bitch bit off his arms at the elbows.

And Captain Carpenter parted with his ears
To a black devil that used him in this wise
O jesus ere his threescore and ten years
Another had plucked out his sweet blue eyes.

Captain Carpenter got up on his roan
And sallied from the gate in hell's despite
I heard him asking in the grimmest tone
If any enemy yet there was to fight?

"To any adversary it is fame
If he risk to be wounded by my tongue
Or burnt in two beneath my red heart's flame
Such are the perils he is cast among.

"But if he can he has a pretty choice
From an anatomy with little to lose
Whether he cut my tongue and take my voice
Or whether it be my round red heart he choose."

It was the neatest knave that ever was seen
Stepping in perfume from his lady's bower
Who at this word put in his merry mien
And fell on Captain Carpenter like a tower.

I would not knock old fellows in the dust
But there lay Captain Carpenter on his back
His weapons were the old heart in his bust
And a blade shook between rotten teeth alack.

The rogue in scarlet and gray soon knew his mind
He wished to get his trophy and depart;
With gentle apology and touch refined
He pierced him and produced the Captain's heart.

God's mercy rest on Captain Carpenter now
I thought him Sirs an honest gentleman
Citizen husband soldier and scholar enow
Let jangling kites eat of him if they can.

But God's deep curses follow after those
That shore him of his goodly nose and ears
His legs and strong arms at the two elbows
And eyes that had not watered seventy years.

The curse of hell upon the sleek upstart
Who got the Captain finally on his back
And took the red red vitals of his heart
And made the kites to whet their beaks clack clack.

Husband Betrayed

AND so he called her Pigeon,
Saying to himself, "She flutters walking
And in sweet monotone she twitters talking."
Nothing was said of her religion.

There was wood-wildness in her,—say a dove,
For doves are pigeons not domesticated
And whoso catches one is soon frustrated,
Expecting quick return of love.

At all events she had a snowy bosom
And trod so mincingly that you would say
She only wanted wings to fly away,
Easy and light and lissome.

She pecked her food with ravished cries,
She sunned her bosom by the wall in the morning,
Preening prettily in the sun and turning
In her birdwise.

But there was heavy dudgeon
When he that should have married him a woman
To sit and drudge and serve him as was common
Discovered he had wived a pigeon.

Little Boy Blue

HE rubbed his eyes and wound the silver horn.
Then the continuum was cracked and torn
With tumbling imps of music being born.

The blowzy sheep lethargic on the ground
Suddenly burned where no fire could be found
And straight up stood their fleeces every pound.

The old bellwether rose and rang his bell,
The seven-days' lambs went skipping and skipped well,
And Baa Baa Baa, the flock careered pellmell.

The yellow cows that milked the savoury cud
Propped on the green grass or the yellow mud
Felt such a tingle in their lady blood,

They ran and tossed their hooves and horns of blue
And jumped the fence and gambolled kangaroo,
Divinely singing as they wandered Moo.

A plague on such a shepherd of the sheep
That careless boy with pretty cows to keep!
With such a burden I should never sleep.

But when his notes had run around the sky,
When they proceeded to grow faint and die,
He stuffed his horn with straw and put it by.

And when the legs were tired beneath the sheep
And there were spent and sleepy cows to keep,
He rubbed his eyes again and went to sleep.

CONRAD AIKEN

Preludes to Attitude

I

TWO coffees in the Español, the last
Bright drops of golden Barsac in a goblet,
Fig paste and candied nuts. . . . Hardy is dead,
And James and Conrad dead, and Shakspere dead,
And old Moore ripens for an obscene grave,
And Yeats for an arid one; and I, and you—
What winding sheet for us, what boards and bricks,
What mummeries, candles, prayers, and pious frauds?
You shall be lapped in Syrian scarlet, woman,
And wear your pearls, and your bright bracelets, too,
Your agate ring, and round your neck shall hang
Your dark blue lapis with its specks of gold.
And I, beside you—ah! but will that be?
For there are dark streams in this dark world, lady,
Gulf Streams and Arctic currents of the soul;
And I may be, before our consummation
Beds us together, cheek by jowl, in earth,
Swept to another shore, where my white bones
Will lie unhonored, or defiled by gulls.

What dignity can death bestow on us,
Who kiss beneath a streetlamp, or hold hands
Half hidden in a taxi or replete
With coffee, figs and Barsac make our way
To a dark bedroom in a wormworn house?
The aspidistra guards the door; we enter,
Per aspidistra—then ad astra—is it?—
And lock ourselves securely in our gloom
And loose ourselves from terror. . . . Here's my hand,
The white scar on my thumb, and here's my mouth

To stop your murmur; speechless let us lie,
And think of Hardy, Shakspeare, Yeats and James;
Comfort our panic hearts with magic names;
Stare at the ceiling, where the taxi lamps
Make ghosts of light; and see, beyond this bed,
That other bed in which we will not move;
And, whether joined or separate, will not love.

II

Sleep: and between the closed eyelids of sleep,
From the dark spirit's still unresting grief,
The one tear burns its way. O God, O God,
What monstrous world is this, whence no escape
Even in sleep? Between the fast-shut lids
This one tear comes, hangs on the lashes, falls:
Symbol of some gigantic dream, that shakes
The secret-sleeping soul. . . . And I descend
By a green cliff that fronts the worldlong sea;
Disastrous shore; where bones of ships and rocks
Are mixed; and beating waves bring in the sails
Of unskilled mariners, ill-starred. The gulls
Fall in a cloud upon foul flotsam there;
The air resounds with cries of scavengers.

Dream: and between the close-locked lids of dream
The terrible infinite intrudes its blue:
Ice: silence: death: the abyss of Nothing.
O God, O God, let the sore soul have peace.
Deliver it from this bondage of harsh dreams.
Release this shadow from its object, this object
From its shadow. Let the fleet soul go nimbly,—
Down,—down,—from step to step of dark,—
From dark to deeper dark, from dark to rest.
And let no Theseus-thread of memory
Shine in that labyrinth, or on those stairs,
To guide her back; nor bring her, where she lies,
Remembrance of a torn world well forgot.

III

—You went to the verge, you say, and came back safely?
Some have not been so fortunate,—some have fallen.
Children go lightly there, from crag to crag,
And coign to coign,—where even the goat is wary,—
And make sport of it. . . . They fling down pebbles,
Following, with eyes undizzied, the long curve,
The long slow outward curve, into the abyss,
As far as eye can follow; and they themselves
Turn back, unworried, to the here and now. . . .
But you have been there, too?—

—I saw at length
The space-defying pine, that on the last
Outjutting rock has cramped its powerful roots.
There stood I too: under that tree I stood:
My hand against its resinous bark: my face
Turned out and downward to the fourfold kingdom.
The wind roared from all quarters. The waterfall
Came down, it seemed, from Heaven. The mighty sound
Of pouring elements,—earth, air, and water,—
The cry of eagles, chatter of falling stones,—
These were the frightful language of that place.
I understood it ill, but understood.—

—You understood it? Tell me, then, its meaning.
It was an all, a nothing, or a something?
Chaos, or divine love, or emptiness?
Water and earth and air and the sun's fire?
Or else, a question simply?—

—Water and fire were there,
And air and earth; there too was emptiness;
All, and nothing, and something too, and love.
But these poor words, these squeaks of ours, in which
We strive to mimic, with strained throats and tongues,
The spawning and outrageous elements—
Alas, how paltry are they! For I saw—

—What did you see?

—I saw myself and God.
I saw the ruin in which godhead lives:
Shapeless and vast: the strewn wreck of the world:
Sadness unplumbed: misery without bound.
Wailing I heard, but also I heard joy.
Wreckage I saw, but also I saw flowers.
Hatred I saw, but also I saw love. . . .
And thus, I saw myself.

—And this alone?

—And this alone awaits you, when you dare
To that sheer verge where horror hangs, and tremble
Against the falling rock; and, looking down,
Search the dark kingdom. It is to self you come,—
And that is God. It is the seed of seeds:
Seed for disastrous and immortal worlds.

It is the answer that no question asked.

IV

Winter for a moment takes the mind; the snow
Falls past the arclight; icicles guard a wall;
The wind moans through a crack in the window;
A keen sparkle of frost is on the sill.
Only for a moment; as spring too might engage it,
With a single crocus in the loam, or a pair of birds;
Or summer with hot grass; or autumn with a yellow leaf.
Winter is there, outside, is here in me:
Drapes the planets with snow, deepens the ice on the moon,
Darkens the darkness that was already darkness.
The mind too has its snows, its slippery paths,
Walls bayoneted with ice, leaves ice-encased.
Here is the in-drawn room, to which you return

When the wind blows from Arcturus: here is the fire
At which you warm your hands and glaze your eyes;
The piano, on which you touch the cold treble;
Five notes like breaking icicles; and then silence.

The alarm-clock ticks, the pulse keeps time with it,
Night and the mind are full of sounds. I walk
From the fire-place, with its imaginary fire,
To the window, with its imaginary view.
Darkness, and snow ticking the window: silence,
And the knocking of chains on a motor-car, the tolling
Of a bronze bell, dedicated to Christ.
And then the uprush of angelic wings, the beating
Of wings demonic, from the abyss of the mind:
The darkness filled with a feathery whistling, wings
Numberless as the flakes of angelic snow,
The deep void swarming with wings and sound of wings,
The winnowing of chaos, the aliveness
Of depth and depth and depth dedicated to death.

Here are the bickerings of the inconsequential,
The chatterings of the ridiculous, the iterations
Of the meaningless. Memory, like a juggler,
Tosses its colored balls into the light, and again
Receives them into darkness. Here is the absurd,
Grinning like an idiot, and the omnivorous quotidian,
Which will have its day. A handful of coins,
Tickets, items from the news, a soiled handkerchief,
A letter to be answered, notice of a telephone call,
The petal of a flower in a volume of Shakspeare,
The program of a concert. The photograph, too,
Propped on the mantel, and beneath it a dry rosebud;
The laundry bill, matches, an ash-tray, Utamaro's
Pearl-fishers. And the rug, on which are still the crumbs
Of yesterday's feast. These are the void, the night,
And the angelic wings that make it sound.

What is the flower? It is not a sigh of color,
Suspuration of purple, sibilation of saffron,

Nor aureate exhalation from the tomb.
 Yet it is these because you think of these,
 An emanation of emanations, fragile
 As light, or glisten, or gleam, or coruscation,
 Creature of brightness, and as brightness brief.
 What is the frost? It is not the sparkle of death,
 The flash of time's wing, seeds of eternity;
 Yet it is these because you think of these.
 And you, because you think of these, are both
 Frost and flower, the bright ambiguous syllable
 Of which the meaning is both no and yes.

Here is the tragic, the distorting mirror
 In which your gesture becomes grandiose;
 Tears form and fall from your magnificent eyes,
 The brow is noble, and the mouth is God's.
 Here is the God who seeks his mother, Chaos,—
 Confusion seeking solution, and life seeking death.
 Here is the rose that woos the icicle; the icicle
 That woos the rose. Here is the silence of silences
 Which dreams of becoming a sound, and the sound
 Which will perfect itself in silence. And all
 These things are only the uprush from the void,
 The wings angelic and demonic, the sound of the abyss
 Dedicated to death. And this is you.

V

Rimbaud and Verlaine, precious pair of poets,
 Genius in both (but what is genius?) playing
 Chess on a marble table at an inn
 With chestnut blossom falling in blond beer
 And on their hair and between knight and bishop—
 Sunlight squared between them on the chess-board,
 Cirrus in heaven, and a squeal of music
 Blown from the leathern door of St. Sulpice—

Discussing, between moves, iamb and spondee
 Anacoluthon and the open vowel

God the great peacock with his angel peacocks
 And his dependent peacocks the bright stars:
 Disputing too of fate as Plato loved it,
 Or Sophocles, who hated and admired,
 Or Socrates, who loved and was amused:

Verlaine puts down his pawn upon a leaf
 And closes his long eyes, which are dishonest,
 And says "Rimbaud, there is one thing to do:
 We must take rhetoric, and wring its neck! . . ."
 Rimbaud considers gravely, moves his Queen;
 And then removes himself to Timbuctoo.

And Verlaine dead,—with all his jades and mauves;
 And Rimbaud dead in Marseilles with a vision,
 His leg cut off, as once before his heart;
 And all reported by a later lackey,
 Whose virtue is his tardiness in time.

Let us describe the evening as it is:—
 The stars disposed in heaven as they are:
 Verlaine and Shakspeare rotting, where they rot,
 Rimbaud remembered, and too soon forgot;

Order in all things, logic in the dark;
 Arrangement in the atom and the spark;
 Time in the heart and sequence in the brain—

Such as destroyed Rimbaud and fooled Verlaine.
 And let us then take godhead by the neck—

And strangle it, and with it, rhetoric.

.

VI

So, in the evening, to the simple cloister:
 This place of boughs, where sounds of water, softly,
 Lap on the stones. And this is what you are:
 Here, in this dusty room, to which you climb

By four steep flights of stairs. The door is closed:
The furies of the city howl behind you:
The last bell plunges rock-like to the sea:
The horns of taxis wail in vain. You come
Once more, at evening, to this simple cloister;
Hushed by the quiet walls, you stand at peace.

What ferns of thought are these, the cool and green,
Dripping with moisture, that festoon these walls?
What water-lights are these, whose pallid rings
Dance with the leaves, or speckle the pale stones?
What spring is this, that bubbles the cold sand,
Urging the sluggish grains of white and gold? . . .
Peace. The delicious silence throngs with ghosts
Of wingèd sound and shadow. These are you.

Now in the evening, in the simple cloister,
You stand and wait; you stand and listen, waiting
For wingèd sounds and wingèd silences,
And long-remembered shadows. Here the rock
Lets down its vine of many colored flowers:
Waiting for you, or waiting for the lizard
To move his lifted claw, or shift his eye
Quick as a jewel. Here the lizard waits
For the slow snake to slide among cold leaves.
And, on the bough that arches the deep pool,
Lapped in a sound of water, the brown thrush
Waits, too, and listens, till his silence makes
Silence as deep as song. And time becomes
A timeless crystal, an eternity,
In which the gone and coming are at peace.

What bird is this, whose silence fills the trees
With rich delight? What leaves and boughs are these,
What lizard, and what snake? . . . The bird is gone:
And while you wait, another comes and goes,—
Another and another; yet your eye,
Although it has not moved, can scarcely say
If birds have come and gone,—so quick, so brief—

Or if the thrush who waits there is the same . . .
The snake and lizard change, yet are the same:
The flowers, many-colored, on the vine,
Open and close their multitude of stars,—
Yet are the same. . . . And all these things are you.

Thus in the evening, in the simple cloister,
Eternity adds ring to ring, the darker
Beyond the brighter; and your silence fills
With such a world of worlds,—so still, so deep,—
As never voice could speak, whether it were
The ocean's or the bird's. The night comes on:
You wait and listen, in the darkened room,
To all these ghosts of change. And they are you.

VII

Then came I to the shoreless shore of silence,
Where never summer was nor shade of tree,
Nor sound of water, nor sweet light of sun,
But only nothing and the shore of nothing,
Above, below, around, and in my heart:

Where day was not, nor night, nor space, nor time,
Where no bird sang, save him of memory,
Nor footstep marked upon the marl, to guide
My halting footstep; and I turned for terror,
Seeking in vain the Pole Star of my thought;

Where it was blown among the shapeless clouds,
And gone as soon as seen, and scarce recalled,
Its image lost and I directionless;
Alone upon the brown sad edge of chaos,
In the wan evening that was evening always;

Then closed my eyes upon the sea of nothing
While memory brought back a sea more bright,
With long, long waves of light, and the swift sun,

And the good trees that bowed upon the wind;
And stood until grown dizzy with that dream;

Seeking in all that joy of things remembered
One image, one the dearest, one most bright,
One face, one star, one daisy, one delight,
One hour with wings most heavenly and swift,
One hand the tenderest upon the heart;

But still no image came, save of that sea,
No tenderer thing than thought of tenderness,
No heart or daisy brighter than the rest;
And only sadness at the bright sea lost,
And mournfulness that all had not been praised.

O lords of chaos, atoms of desire,
Whirlwind of fruitfulness, destruction's seed,
Hear now upon the void my late delight,
The quick brief cry of memory, that knows
At the dark's edge how great the darkness is.

VIII

Beloved, let us once more praise the rain.
Let us discover some new alphabet,
For this, the often-praised; and be ourselves,
The rain, the chickweed, and the burdock leaf,
The green-white privet flower, the spotted stone,
And all that welcomes rain; the sparrow, too,—
Who watches with a hard eye, from seclusion,
Beneath the elm-tree bough, till rain is done.

There is an oriole who, upside down,
Hangs at his nest, and flicks an orange wing,—
Under a tree as dead and still as lead;
There is a single leaf, in all this heaven
Of leaves, which rain has loosened from its twig:
The stem breaks, and it falls, but it is caught
Upon a sister leaf, and thus she hangs;

There is an acorn cup, beside a mushroom,
Which catches three drops from the stooping cloud.

The timid bee goes back to hive; the fly
Under the broad leaf of the hollyhock
Perpends stupid with cold; the raindark snail
Surveys the wet world from a watery stone . . .
And still the syllables of water whisper:
The wheel of cloud whirs slowly: while we wait
In the dark room; and in your heart I find
One silver raindrop,—on a hawthorn leaf,—
Orion in a cobweb, and the World.

IX

Nothing to say, you say? Then we'll say nothing:
But step from rug to rug and hold our breaths,
Count the green ivy-strings against the window,
The pictures on the wall. Let us exchange
Pennies of gossip, news from nowhere, names
Held in despite or honor; we have seen
The weather-vanes veer westward, and the clouds
Obedient to the wind; have walked in snow;
Forgotten and remembered—

But we are strangers;

Came here by paths which never crossed; and stare
At the blind mystery of each to each.
You've seen the sea and mountains? taken ether?
And slept in hospitals from Rome to Cairo?
Why so have I; and lost my tonsils, too;
And drunk the waters of the absolute.
But is it this we meet for, of an evening,
Is it this—

O come, like Shelley,
For god's sake let us sit on honest ground
And tell harsh stories of the deaths of kings!
Have out our hearts, confess our blood,

Our foulness and our virtue! I have known
Such sunsets of despair as god himself
Might weep for of a Sunday; and then slept
As dreamlessly as Jesus in his tomb.
I have had time in one hand, space in the other,
And mixed them to no purpose. I have seen
More in a woman's eye than can be liked,
And less than can be known. And as for you—

O creature of the frost and sunlight, worm
Uplifted by the atom's joy, receiver
Of stolen goods, unconscious thief of god—
Tell me upon this sofa how you came
From darkness to this darkness, from what terror
You found this restless pause in terror, learned
The bitter light you follow. We will talk—

But it is time to go, and I must go;
And what we thought, and silenced, none shall know.

X

The first note, simple; the second note, distinct;
The third note, harsh; the fourth, an innuendo;
The fifth, a humble triad; and the sixth—
Suddenly—is the chord of chords, that breaks
The evening; and from evening calls the angel,
One voice divinely singing.

Thus, at random,
This coil of worlds in which we grope; and thus
Our comings and our goings. So the twilight
Deepens the hour from rose to purple; so
One bell-note is the death-note, and completes
The half-remembered with the soon-forgotten.
The threes and fives compute our day; we move
To doom with all things moving.

You and I

Are things compounded of time's heart-beats, stretching
The vascular instant from the vascular past;
You, with forgotten worlds, and I with worlds
Forgotten and remembered. Yet the leaf,
With all its bleeding veins, is not more torn
Than you are torn, this moment, from the last.
Can you rejoin it? Is it here, or there?
Where is that drop of blood you knew last year?
Where is that image which you loved, that frame
Of ghostly apparitions in your thought,
Alchemic mystery of your childhood, lost
With all its dizzy colors? . . . It is gone.
Only the echo's echo can be heard.
Thrice-mirrored, the ghost pales.

You plunge, poor soul,

From time's colossal brink into that chasm
Of change and limbo and immortal flux;
And bring up only, in your blood-stained hands,
One grain of sand that sparkles. Plunge again,
Poor diver, among weeds and death! and bring
The pearl of brightness up. It is this instant
When all is well with us: when hell and heaven
Arch in a chord of glory over madness;
When Pole Star sings to Sirius; and the wave
Of ultimate Ether breaks on ultimate Nothing.
The world's a rose which comes this night to flower:
This evening is its light. And it is we,
Who, with our harmonies and discords, woven
Of myriad things forgotten and remembered,
Urge the vast twilight to immortal bloom.

Preludes to Definition

I

AND there I saw the seed upon the mountain
but it was not a seed it was a star
but it was not a star it was a world
but it was not a world it was a god
but it was not a god it was a laughter

blood red within and lightning for its rind
the root came out like gold and it was anger
the root came out like fire and it was fury
the root came out like horn and it was purpose
but it was not a root it was a hand

destructive strong and eager full of blood
and broke the rocks and set them on each other
and broke the waters into shafts of light
and set them end to end and made them seas
and out of laughter wrung a grief of water

and thus beneath the web of mind I saw
under the west and east of web I saw
under the bloodshot spawn of stars I saw
under the water and the inarticulate laughter
the coiling down the coiling in the coiling

mean and intense and furious and secret
profound and evil and despatched in darkness
shot homeward foully in a filth of effort
clotted and quick and thick and without aim
spasm of concentration of the sea

and there I saw the seed upon the shore
but it was not a seed it was a man
but it was not a man it was a god
magnificent and humble in the morning
with angels poised upon his either hand.

II

On that wild verge in the late light he stood,
the last one, who was alone, the naked one,
wingless unhappy one who had climbed there,
bruised foot and bruised hand,
first beholder of the indecipherable land,

the nameless land, the selfless land,
stood and beheld it from the granite cliff
the far beneath, the far beyond, the far above,
water and wind, the cry of the alone
his own the valley, his own the unthinking stone

and said—as I with labor have shaped this,
out of a cloud this world of rock and water,
as I have wrought with thought, or unthinking wrought,
so that a dream is brought
in agony and joy to such a realm as this

let now some god take also me and mould me
some vast and dreadful or divine dream hold me
and shape me suddenly beyond my purpose
beyond my power
to a new wilderness of hour

that I may be to him as this to me,
out of a cloud made shore and sea,
instant agony and then the splendid shape
in which is his escape,
myself at last only a well-made dream to be—

and as he spoke, his own divine dream took
sudden kingdom of the wide world, and broke
the orders into rainbows, the numbers down,
all things to nothing; and he himself became
a cloud, in which the lightning dreamed a name.

III

Still the same function, still the same habit come,
the endless algebra that marks the mind.
A leads to b and b to c; we wait
in vain for change. No sudden Clytemnestra
walks from the scene and with her takes the world—

or so the sentry said. And watched the moon
pull half the desert downward as she went,
involved in silvered trees and dunes and towers
shadows of spears and whatnot. Moons and moons—
all gone in one, and all the tides gone too,
salt blood, salt water. What's left but dark. What's left
but night, night which is function of the day;
or so the sentry said.

And saw his feet,
sandalled, and semi-prehensile, on the sand,
gripping the moonchilled sand and then releasing,
forward and back along the wall's foot, turning
under the fig-tree. Lately it had a shadow,
but now had none. And "a-prime" leads to "b-prime,"
build how you will. Nuisance, that there should be
no wildness left in nature—no chance of dicethrow
to change the world, or changed then change it back—
the two plus two makes eight—!

Clytemnestra
walked on the terrace when the moon had sunk,
and licked her little finger. Tasted blood.
Addressed herself: Woman, you've changed the world,
you should have been a man. And henceforth men—
use them, use them! Smiled, and walked in the dark,
and heard, below the wall, the sentry's cough.

IV

What without speech we knew and could not say
what without thought we did and could not change
violence of the hand which the mind thought strange
let us take these things into another world,
another dream

what without love we touched pronouncing good
what without touch we loved and gave no sign
violence of spirit which only spirit knew divine
let us take these things into another world,
another sleep

walk with me heliotrope fly with me sparrow
come beating of my heart and learn how life is narrow
how little, and ill, will be remembered by tomorrow
let us give our lives into another world
another hand

where like old rocks we shall be heaped forgetful;
or waste away like stars in fiery stillness;
no clock with mortal cry to speak our illness;
let us take our deaths into another time
another god

come girl, come golden-breasted girl, and walk
on the so silent and sun-sandalled path
between the foremath and the aftermath
let us hurl our joy into another chaos, another wrath
and make it love

what without speech we know we then shall say
and all our violence will there be gay
what without thought we do will be but play
and our unspoken love as bright as day
and we shall live.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

On Hearing a Symphony of Beethoven

SWEET sounds, oh, beautiful music, do not cease!
Reject me not into the world again.
With you alone is excellence and peace,
Mankind made plausible, his purpose plain.
Enchanted in your air benign and shrewd,
With limbs a-sprawl and empty faces pale,
The spiteful and the stingy and the rude
Sleep like the scullions in the fairy-tale.
This moment is the best the world can give:
The tranquil blossom on the tortured stem.
Reject me not, sweet sounds; oh, let me live,
Till Doom espy my towers and scatter them,
A city spell-bound under the aging sun.
Music my rampart, and my only one.

What Lips My Lips Have Kissed

WHAT lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply;
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone;

I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Renascence

ALL I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood;
I turned and looked another way,
And saw three islands in a bay.
So with my eyes I traced the line
Of the horizon, thin and fine,
Straight around till I was come
Back to where I started from;
And all I saw from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood.
Over these things I could not see;
These were the things that bounded me;
And I could touch them with my hand,—
Almost, I thought, from where I stand.
And all at once things seemed so small
My breath came short, and scarce at all.
But, sure, the sky is big, I said;
Miles and miles above my head;
So here upon my back I'll lie
And look my fill into the sky.
And so I looked, and, after all,
The sky was not so very tall.
The sky, I said, must somewhere stop,
And—sure enough!—I see the top.
The sky, I thought, is not so grand;
I 'most could touch it with my hand!
And, reaching up my hand to try,
I screamed to feel it touch the sky.
I screamed, and—lo!—Infinity
Came down and settled over me;
And, pressing of the Undefined
The definition on my mind,
Held up before my eyes a glass

Through which my shrinking sight did pass
Until it seemed I must behold
Immensity made manifold;
Whispered to me a word whose sound
Deafened the air for worlds around,
And brought unmuffled to my ears
The gossiping of friendly spheres,
The creaking of the tented sky,
The ticking of Eternity.

I saw and heard, and knew at last
The How and Why of all things, past,
And present, and forevermore.
The universe, cleft to the core,
Lay open to my probing sense
That, sick'ning, I would fain pluck thence
But could not—nay! But needs must suck
At the great wound, and could not pluck
My lips away till I had drawn
All venom out—Ah, fearful pawn!
For my omniscience paid I toll
In infinite remorse of soul.
All sin was of my sinning, all
Atoning mine, and mine the gall
Of all regret. Mine was the weight
Of every brooded wrong, the hate
That stood behind each envious thrust,
Mine every greed, mine every lust.
And all the while for every grief,
Each suffering, I craved relief
With individual desire—
Craved all in vain! And felt fierce fire
About a thousand people crawl;
Perished with each—then mourned for all!
A man was starving in Capri;
He moved his eyes and looked at me;
I felt his gaze, I heard his moan,
And knew his hunger as my own.
I saw at sea a great fog-bank

Between two ships that struck and sank;
A thousand screams the heavens smote;
And every scream tore through my throat.
No hurt I did not feel, no death
That was not mine; mine each last breath
That, crying, met an answering cry
From the compassion that was I.
All suffering mine, and mine its rod;
Mine, pity like the pity of God.
Ah, awful weight! Infinity
Pressed down upon the finite me!
My anguished spirit, like a bird,
Beating against my lips I heard;
Yet lay the weight so close about
There was no room for it without.
And so beneath the weight lay I
And suffered death, but could not die.

Deep in the earth I rested now;
Cool is its hand upon the brow
And soft its breast beneath the head
Of one who is so gladly dead.
And all at once, and over all,
The pitying rain began to fall;
I lay and heard each pattering hoof
Upon my lowly, thatched roof,
And seemed to love the sound far more
Than ever I had done before.
For rain it hath a friendly sound
To one who's six feet underground;
And scarce the friendly voice or face:
A grave is such a quiet place.

The rain, I said, is kind to come
And speak to me in my new home.
I would I were alive again
To kiss the fingers of the rain,
To drink into my eyes the shine
Of every slanting silver line,

To catch the freshened, fragrant breeze
From drenched and dripping apple-trees.
For soon the shower will be done,
And then the broad face of the sun
Will laugh above the rain-soaked earth
Until the world with answering mirth
Shakes joyously, and each round drop
Rolls, twinkling, from its grass-blade top,
How can I bear it; buried here,
While overhead the sky grows clear
And blue again after the storm?
O, multi-coloured, multiform,
Beloved beauty over me,
That I shall never, never see
Again! Spring-silver, autumn-gold,
That I shall never more behold!
Sleeping your myriad magics through,
Close-sepulchred away from you!
O God, I cried, give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!
Upset each cloud's gigantic gourd
And let the heavy rain, down-poured
In one big torrent, set me free,
Washing my grave away from me!
I ceased; and, through the breathless hush
That answered me, the far-off rush
Of herald wings came whispering
Like music down the vibrant string
Of my ascending prayer, and—crash!
Before the wild wind's whistling lash
The startled storm-clouds reared on high
And plunged in terror down the sky,
And the big rain in one black wave
Fell from the sky and struck my grave.

I know not how such things can be
I only know there came to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy living things;

A sound as of some joyous elf
Singing sweet songs to please himself,
And, through and over everything,
A sense of glad awakening.
The grass, a tip-toe at my ear,
Whispering to me I could hear;
I felt the rain's cool finger-tips
Brushed tenderly across my lips,
Laid gently on my sealèd sight,
And all at once the heavy night
Fell from my eyes and I could see—
A drenched and dripping apple-tree.
A last long line of silver rain,
A sky grown clear and blue again.
And as I looked a quickening gust
Of wind blew up to me and thrust
Into my face a miracle
Of orchard-breath, and with the smell—
I know not how such things can be!—
I breathed my soul back into me.
Ah! Up then from the ground sprang I
And hailed the earth with such a cry
As is not heard save from a man
Who has been dead, and lives again.
About the trees my arms I wound;
Like one gone mad I hugged the ground;
I raised my quivering arms on high;
I laughed and laughed into the sky,
Till at my throat a strangling sob
Caught fiercely, and a great heart-throb
Sent instant tears into my eyes;
O God, I cried, no dark disguise
Can e'er hereafter hide from me
Thy radiant identity!
Thou canst not move across the grass
But my quick eyes will see Thee pass,
Nor speak, however silently,
But my hushed voice will answer Thee.
I know the path that tells Thy way

Through the cool eve of every day;
God, I can push the grass apart
And lay my finger on Thy heart!
The world stands out on either side
No wider than the heart is wide;
Above the world is stretched the sky—
No higher than the soul is high.
The heart can push the sea and land
Farther away on either hand;
The soul can split the sky in two,
And let the face of God shine through.
But East and West will pinch the heart
That cannot keep them pushed apart;
And he whose soul is flat—the sky
Will cave in on him by and by.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

L'An Trentiesme de Mon Âge

AND I have come upon this place
By lost ways, by a nod, by words,
By faces, by an old man's face
At Morlaix lifted to the birds,

By hands upon the tablecloth
At Aldebori's, by the thin
Child's hands that opened to the moth
And let the flutter of the moonlight in,

By hands, by voices, by the voice
Of Mrs. Husman on the stair,
By Margaret's "If we had the choice
To choose or not"—through her thick hair,

By voices, by the creak and fall
 Of footsteps on the upper floor,
 By silence waiting in the hall
 Between the doorbell and the door,

By words, by voices, a lost way—
 And here above the chimney stack
 The unknown constellations sway—
 And by what way shall I go back?

The Too-Late Born

WE too, we too, descending once again
 The hills of our own land, we too have heard
 Far off—Ah, que ce cor a longue haleine—
 The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain,
 The first, the second blast, the failing third,
 And with the third turned back and climbed once more
 The steep road southward, and heard faint the sound
 Of swords, of horses, the disastrous war,
 And crossed the dark defile at last, and found
 At Ronçevaux upon the darkening plain
 The dead against the dead and on the silent ground
 The silent slain—

Einstein

STANDING between the sun and moon pre-
 serves
 A certain secrecy. Or seems to keep
 Something inviolate if only that
 His father was an ape.

Sweet music makes
 All of his walls sound hollow and he heard
 Sighs in the panelling and underfoot

Melancholy voices. So there is a door
 Behind the seamless arras and within
 A living something:—but no door that will
 Admit the sunlight nor no windows where
 The mirror moon can penetrate his bones
 With cold deflection. He is small and tight
 And solidly contracted into space
 Opaque and perpendicular which blots
 Earth with its shadow. And he terminates
 In shoes which bearing up against the sphere
 Attract his concentration,

for he ends

If there why then no farther, as, beyond
 Extensively the universe itself,
 Or chronologically the two dates
 Original and ultimate of time,

Nor could Jehovah and the million stars
 Staring within their solitudes of light,
 Nor all night's constellations be contained
 Between his boundaries,

nor could the sun

Receive him nor his groping roots run down
 Into the loam and steaming sink of time
 Where coils the middle serpent and the ooze
 Breeds maggots.

But it seems assured he ends

Precisely at his shoes in proof whereof
 He can revolve in orbits opposite
 The orbit of the earth and so refuse
 All planetary converse. And he wears
 Clothes that distinguish him from what is not
 His own circumference, as first a coat
 Shaped to his back or modelled in reverse
 Of the surrounding cosmos and below
 Trousers preserving his detachment from
 The revolutions of the stars.

His hands

*Einstein
 upon a public
 bench
 Wednesday
 the ninth
 contemplates
 finity*

*Einstein de-
 scends the
 Hartmann-
 zweilerstrasse*

And face go naked and alone converse
 With what encloses him, as rough and smooth
 And sound and silence and the intervals
 Of rippling ether and the swarming motes
 Clouding a privy: move to them and make
 Shadows that mirror them within his skull
 In perpendiculars and curves and planes
 And bodiless significances blurred
 As figures undersea and images
 Patterned from eddies of the air.

Which are
 Perhaps not shadows but the thing itself
 And may be understood.

*Einstein
 ultimately
 before a
 mirror
 accepts the
 hypothesis
 of exterior
 reality*

Decorticate
 The petals of the enfolding world and leave
 A world in reason which is in himself
 And has his own dimensions. Here do trees
 Adorn the hillsides and hillsides enrich
 The hazy marches of the sky and skies
 Kindle and char to ashes in the wind,
 And winds blow toward him from the verge, and
 suns
 Rise on his dawn and on his dusk go down
 And moons prolong his shadow. And he moves
 Here as within a garden in a close
 And where he moves the bubble of the world
 Takes centre and there circle round his head
 Like golden flies in summer the gold stars.

Disintegrates.

For suddenly he feels
 The planet plunge beneath him, and a flare
 Falls from the upper darkness to the dark
 And awful shadows loom across the sky
 That have no life from him and suns go out
 And livid as a drowned man's face the moon

Floats to the lapsing surface of the night
And sinks discolored under.

So he knows
Less than a world and must communicate
Beyond his knowledge.

Outstretched on the earth
He plunges both his arms into the swirl
Of what surrounds him but the yielding grass
Excludes his finger tips and the soft soil
Will not endure confusion with his hands,
Nor will the air receive him nor the light
Dissolve their difference but recoiling turns
Back from his touch. By which denial he can
Crawl on the earth and sense the opposing sun
But not make answer to them.

Put out leaves
And let the old remembering wind think through
A green intelligence, or under sea
Float out long filaments of amber in
The numb and wordless reverie of tides.

In autumn the black branches dripping rain
Bruise his uncovered bones and in the spring
His swollen tips are gorged with aching blood
That bursts the laurel.

But although they seize
His sense he has no name for them, no word
To give them meaning and no utterance
For what they say. Feel the new summer's sun
Crawl up the warmed relaxing hide of earth
And weep for his lost youth, his childhood home
And a wide water on an inland shore!
Or to the night's mute asking in the blood
Give back a girl's name and three notes together!

*Einstein was
successfully
after lunch
attempts to
enter,
essaying
synthesis
with what's
not he, the
Bernese
Oberland!*

He cannot think the smell of after rain
 Nor close his thought around the long smooth lag
 And falter of a wind, nor bring to mind
 Dusk and the whippoorwill.

*Einstein
 dissolved in
 violins in-
 vades the
 molecular
 structure
 of F. P.
 Paepke's
 Sommer-
 garten.
 Is repulsed*

But violins
 Split out of trees and strung to tone can sing
 Strange nameless words that image to the ear
 What has no waiting image in the brain.
 She plays in darkness and the droning wood
 Dissolves to reverberations of a world
 Beating in waves against him, till his sense
 Trembles to rhythm and his naked brain
 Feels without utterance in form the flesh
 Of dumb and incommunicable earth,
 And knows at once, and without knowledge how,
 The stroke of the blunt rain, and blind receives
 The sun.

When he a moment occupies
 The hollow of himself and like an air
 Pervades all other.

But the violin
 Presses its dry insistence through the dream
 That swims above it, shivering its speech
 Back to a rhythm that becomes again
 Music and vaguely ravel into sound.

*To Einstein
 asking at the
 gate of stone
 none opens*

So then there is no speech that can resolve
 Their texture to clear thought and enter them.

The Virgin of Chartres whose bleaching bones still
 wear
 The sapphires of her glory knew a word—
 That now is three round letters like the three
 Round empty staring punctures in a skull.
 And there were words in Rome once and one time
 Words at Eleusis.

Now there are no words

Nor names to name them and they will not speak
 But grope against his groping touch and throw
 The long unmeaning shadows of themselves
 Across his shadow and resist his sense.

*Einstein
 bearing be-
 hind the wall
 of the Grand
 Hôtel du
 Nord the
 stars dis-
 covers the
 Back Stage*

Why then if they resist destroy them. Dumb
 Yet speak them in their elements. Whole,
 Break them to reason.

He lies upon his bed
 Exerting on Arcturus and the moon
 Forces proportional inversely to
 The squares of their remoteness, and conceives
 The universe.

Atomic.

He can count
 Ocean in atoms and weigh out the air
 In multiples of one and subdivide
 Light to its numbers.

If they will not speak
 Let them be silent in their particles.
 Let them be dead and he will lie among
 Their dust and cipher them,—undo the signs
 Of their unreal identities and free
 The pure and single factor of all sums,—
 Solve them to unity.

Democritus
 Scooped handfuls out of stones and like the sea
 Let earth run through his fingers. Well, he too,
 He can achieve obliquity and learn
 The cold distortion of the winter's sun
 That breaks the surfaces of summer.

*Einstein on
 the terrasse
 of The
 Acacias
 forces the
 secret door*

Stands

Facing the world upon a windy slope
 And with his mind relaxes the stiff forms
 Of all he sees so that the heavy hills
 Impend like rushing water and the earth
 Hangs on the steep and momentary crest
 Of overflowing ruin.

Overflow!

Sweep over into movement and dissolve
All differences in the indifferent flux!
Crumble to eddyings of dust and drown
In change the thing that changes!

There begins

A vague inquiet in the fallow ground,
A seething in the grass, a bubbling swirl
Over the surface of the fields that spreads
Around him gathering until the green
Boils and beneath the frothy loam the rocks
Ferment and simmer and like thinning smoke
The trees melt into nothing.

Still he stands

Watching the vortex widen and involve
In swirling dissolution the whole earth
And circle through the skies till swaying time
Collapses crumpling into dark the stars
And motion ceases and the sifting world
Opens beneath.

When he shall feel infuse
His flesh with the rent body of all else
And spin within his opening brain the motes
Of suns and worlds and spaces.

*Einstein
enters*

Like a foam

His flesh is withered and his shrivelling
And ashy bones are scattered on the dark.
But still the dark denies him. Still withstands
The dust his penetration and flings back
Himself to answer him.

Which seems to keep
Something inviolate. A living something.

You, Andrew Marvell

AND here face down beneath the sun,
And here upon earth's noonward height,

To feel the always coming on,
The always rising of the night.

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever-climbing shadow grow,

31-2

And strange at Ecbatan the trees
Take leaf by leaf the evening, strange,
The flooding dark about their knees,
The mountains over Persia change,

And now at Kermanshah the gate,
Dark, empty, and the withered grass,
And through the twilight now the late
Few travellers in the westward pass.

And Baghdad darken and the bridge
Across the silent river gone,
And through Arabia the edge
Of evening widen and steal on,

And deepen on Palmyra's street
The wheel rut in the ruined stone,
And Lebanon fade out and Crete
High through the clouds and overblown,

And over Sicily the air
Still flashing with the landward gulls,
And loom and slowly disappear
The sails above the shadowy hulls,

And Spain go under and the shore
Of Africa, the gilded sand,
And evening vanish and no more
The low pale light across that land,

Nor now the long light on the sea—

And here face downward in the sun
To feel how swift, how secretly,
The shadow of the night comes on. . . .

Memorial Rain

AMBASSADOR PUSER the ambassador
 Reminds himself in French, felicitous tongue,
 What these (young men no longer) lie here for
 In rows that once, and somewhere else, were young—

All night in Brussels the wind had tugged at my door:
 I had heard the wind at my door and the trees strung
 Taut, and to me who had never been before
 In that country it was a strange wind blowing
 Steadily, stiffening the walls, the floor,
 The roof of my room. I had not slept for knowing
 He too, dead, was a stranger in that land
 And felt beneath the earth in the wind's flowing
 A tightening of roots and would not understand,
 Remembering lake winds in Illinois,
 That strange wind. I had felt his bones in the sand
 Listening.

—Reflects that these enjoy
 Their country's gratitude, that deep repose,
 That peace no pain can break, no hurt destroy,
 That rest, that sleep—

At Ghent the wind rose.
 There was a smell of rain and a heavy drag
 Of wind in the hedges but not as the wind blows
 Over fresh water when the waves lag
 Foaming and the willows huddle and it will rain:
 I felt him waiting.

—Indicates the flag
 Which (may he say) enisles in Flanders' plain
 This little field these happy, happy dead
 Have made America—

In the ripe grain
 The wind coiled glistening, darted, fled,
 Dragging its heavy body: at Waereghem

The wind coiled in the grass above his head:
Waiting—listening—

—Dedicates to them
This earth their bones have hallowed, this last gift
A grateful country—

Under the dry grass stem
The words are blurred, are thickened, the words sift
Confused by the rasp of the wind, by the thin grating
Of ants under the grass, the minute shift
And tumble of dusty sand separating
From dusty sand. The roots of the grass strain,
Tighten, the earth is rigid, waits—he is waiting—

And suddenly, and all at once, the rain!

The people scatter, they run into houses, the wind
Is trampled under the rain, shakes free, is again
Trampled. The rain gathers, running in thinned
Spurts of water that ravel in the dry sand
Seeping into the sand under the grass roots, seeping
Between cracked boards to the bones of a clenched hand:
The earth relaxes, loosens; he is sleeping,
He rests, he is quiet, he sleeps in a strange land.

MARK VAN DOREN

Axle Song

THAT anything should be—
Place, time, earth, error—
And a round eye in man to see:
That was the terror.

And a true mind to try
 Cube, sphere, deep, short, and long—
 That was the burden of the sky's
 Hoarse axle song.

Improbable the stoat—
 The mouse, toad, worm, wolf, tiger;
 Unthinkable the stallion's trot,
 Behemoth's swagger.

Unspeakable; yet worse—
 Name, look, feel, memory, and number:
 Man there with his perverse
 Power not to slumber.

Let things created sleep—
 Rock, beast, rain, sand, and sliding river.
 So growled the earth's revolving heap;
 And will forever.

No Faith

WHAT held the bones together? Not belief,
 Not anything he could probe, no ligament god.
 Why was the world so one for him yet many,
 So woman and yet so speechless? Then the odd,
 The furtive, ashamed security. We wondered.
 But there was no faith in him that sang or thundered.

There was no understanding in this man
 Of his own simplest secret: of the way
 Earth's air kept warm for him, and how there shone
 Always another light outdoors of day.
 He would have chosen darkness; he denied
 What was so strange, so palpable, inside;

He said he could be unhappy. But we knew.
 There was this sweet continuum, this flesh;

There were these bones, articulated so—
A web they were, with music up the mesh,
A frame of hidden wires too deep for tone,
A skeleton wholeness, humming up to him alone.

He must have heard the harmony, but he swore
Time talked to him in separated sounds.
He took them as they came and loved them singly—
Each one, he parried, perfect within its bounds.
As for the burden's end, the tune's direction—
He smiled; he was content with disconnection.

Yet who could smile and mean it? Who could rest,
As this man did, midway the million things?
Who else could be serene at truth's circumference
When only the known center of it sings?
Who else but he?—submissive to each part
Till it became the all, the homeless heart.

The Whisperer

BE extra careful by this door,
No least, least sound, she said.
It is my brother Oliver's,
And he would strike you dead.

Come on. It is the top step now,
And carpet all the way.
But wide enough for only one,
Unless you carry me.

I love your face as hot as this.
Put me down, though, and creep.
My father! He would strangle you,
I think, like any sheep.

Now take me up again, again;
We're at the landing post.
You hear her saying Hush, and Hush?
It is my mother's ghost.

She would have loved you, loving me.
She had a voice as fine—
I love you more for such a kiss,
And here is mine, is mine.

And one for her—Oh, quick, the door!
I cannot bear it so.
The vestibule, and out; for now
Who passes that would know?

Here we could stand all night and let
Strange people smile and stare.
But you must go, and I must lie
Alone up there, up there.

Remember? But I understand.
More with a kiss is said.
And do not mind it if I cry,
Passing my mother's bed.

His Trees

ONLY when he was old enough, and silent:
Not breaking-old; time-coated; that was it;
Only when he was dry enough: but seasoned;
Time-guarded against all weather-warp and split;
Time-roughened, with years of ridges down his bark:
Then only grew he worthy of their remark.

They did not move, but watched him as he came,
Man-tired, and paused and peered among their shade.
No magical advancing; each emerged
Only as slow acquaintance thus was made:

The oaks and he confronted, that was all;
Save that his leaves of ignorance could fall.

They fell, and filled the temperate aging air
With a crisp rustle, flake on flake descending;
Till in some month it ceased, and trunk on trunk
Acknowledged him, in rows without an ending.
The lesser with the greater shadows wove:
He there with them, companions of the grove.

The ash was proud to show him in its side
How narrowly and coldly time had cut:
A flank of iron; and how its sharpened leaves
Stood out too stiff for any wind to shut:
Stubborn; yet some antiquity of grace
Still kept it king, still proved the priestly face.

That maple there, the old man of the wood:
Shaggy, with clefts of shadow in its rind;
Like a deep-bearded deity, becloaked,
Shed down upon him, slowly, what of its mind
Went floating: lightly, lightly; though of late
Time pressed it under centuries of weight.

He touched them all, and moved among their shapes
Like a blind child whom giants might despise.
Yet he was their true copy; so they leaned,
Indulgent to his autumn; met his eyes;
And uttered as much, responding to his hands,
As ever a second childhood understands.

E. E. CUMMINGS

My Father Moved Through Dooms of Love

MY father moved through dooms of love
through sames of am through haves of give,
singing each morning out of each night
my father moved through depths of height

this motionless forgetful where
turned at his glance to shining here;
that if (so timid air is firm)
under his eyes would stir and squirm

newly as from unburied which
floats the first who, his april touch
drove sleeping selves to swarm their fates
woke dreamers to their ghostly roots

and should some why completely weep
my father's fingers brought her sleep:
vainly no smallest voice might cry
for he could feel the mountains grow.

Lifting the valleys of the sea
my father moved through griefs of joy;
praising a forehead called the moon
singing desire into begin

joy was his song and joy so pure
a heart of star by him could steer
and pure so now and now so yes
the wrists of twilight would rejoice

keen as midsummer's keen beyond
conceiving mind of sun will stand,
so strictly (over utmost him
so hugely) stood my father's dream

his flesh was flesh his blood was blood:
no hungry man but wished him food;
no cripple wouldn't creep one mile
uphill to only see him smile.

Scorning the pomp of must and shall
my father moved through dooms of feel;
his anger was as right as rain
his pity was as green as grain

septembering arms of year extend
less humbly wealth to foe and friend
then he to foolish and to wise
offered immeasurable is

proudly and (by octobering flame
beckoned) as earth will downward climb,
so naked for immortal work
his shoulders marched against the dark

his sorrow was as true as bread:
no liar looked him in the head;
if every friend became his foe
he'd laugh and build a world with snow.

My father moved through theys of we,
singing each new leaf out of each tree
(and every child was sure that spring
danced when she heard my father sing)

then let men kill which cannot share,
let blood and flesh be mud and mire,
scheming imagine, passion willed,
freedom a drug that's bought and sold

giving to steal and cruel kind,
a heart to fear, to doubt a mind,
to differ a disease of same,
conform the pinnacle of am

though dull were all we taste as bright,
bitter all utterly things sweet,
maggoty minus and dumb death
all we inherit, all bequeath

•
and nothing quite so least as truth
—i say though hate were why men breathe—
because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town

ANYONE lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then) they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

As Freedom Is a Breakfastfood

AS freedom is a breakfastfood
or truth can live with right and wrong
or molehills are from mountains made
—long enough and just so long
will being pay the rent of seem
and genius please the talentgang
and water most encourage flame

as hatracks into peachtrees grow
or hopes dance best on bald men's hair

and every finger is a toe
and any courage is a fear
—long enough and just so long
will the impure think all things pure
and hornets wail by children stung

or as the seeing are the blind
and robins never welcome spring
nor flatfolk prove their world is round
nor dingsters die at break of dong
and common's rare and millstones float
—long enough and just so long
tomorrow will not be too late

worms are the words but joy's the voice
down shall go which and up come who
breasts will be breasts thighs will be thighs
deeds cannot dream what dreams can do
—time is a tree (this life one leaf)
but love is the sky and i am for you
just so long and long enough

Always Before Your Voice My Soul

ALWAYS before your voice my soul
half-beautiful and wholly droll
is as some smooth and awkward foal,
whereof young moons begin
the newness of his skin,

so of my stupid sincere youth
the exquisite failure uncouth
discovers a trembling and smooth
Unstrength, against the strong
silences of your song;

or as a single lamb whose sheen
of full unsheared fleece is mean

beside its lovelier friends, between
your thoughts more white than wool
My thought is sorrowful:

but my heart smote in trembling thirds
of anguish quivers to your words,
As to a flight of thirty birds
shakes with a thickening fright
the sudden fooled light.

it is the autumn of a year:
When through the thin air stooped with fear,
across the harvest whitely peer
empty of surprise
death's faultless eyes

(whose hand my folded soul shall know
while on faint hills do frailly go
The peaceful terrors of the snow,
and before your dead face
which sleeps, a dream shall pass)

and these my days their sounds and flowers
Fall in a pride of petaled hours,
like flowers at the feet of mowers
whose bodies strong with love
through meadows hugely move.

yet what am i that such and such
mysteries very simply touch
me, whose heart-wholeness overmuch
Expects of your hair pale,
a terror musical?

while in an earthless hour my fond
soul seriously yearns beyond
this fern of sunset frond on frond
opening in a rare
slowness of gloried air . . .

The flute of morning stilled in noon—
noon the implacable bassoon—
now Twilight seeks the thrill of moon,
washed with a wild and thin
despair of violin

*Somewhere I Have Never Travelled,
Gladly Beyond*

SOMEWHERE i have never travelled, gladly beyond
any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclothe me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture
compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

H. PHELPS PUTNAM

Hasbrouck and the Rose

HASBROUCK was there and so were Bill
And Smollet Smith the poet, and Ames was there.
After his thirteenth drink, the burning Smith,
Raising his fourteenth trembling in the air,
Said, "Drink with me, Bill, drink up to the Rose."
But Hasbrouck laughed like old men in a myth,
Inquiring, "Smollet, are you drunk? What rose?"
And Smollet said, "I drunk? It may be so;
Which comes from brooding on the flower, the flower
I mean toward which mad hour by hour
I travel brokenly; and I shall know,
With Hermes and the alchemists—but, hell,
What use is it talking that way to you?
Hard-boiled, unbroken egg, what can you care
For the enfolded passion of the Rose?"
Then Hasbrouck's voice rang like an icy bell:

"Arcane romantic flower, meaning what?
Do you know what it meant? Do I?
We do not know.
Unfolding pungent rose, the glowing bath
Of ecstasy and clear forgetfulness;
Closing and secret bud one might achieve
By long debauchery—
Except that I have eaten it, and so
There is no call for further lunacy.
In Springfield, Massachusetts, I devoured
The mystic, the improbable, the Rose.
For two nights and a day, rose and rosette,
And petal after petal and the heart,
I had my banquet by the beams

Of four electric stars which shone
Weakly into my room, for there,
Drowning their light and gleaming at my side,
Was the incarnate star
Whose body bore the stigma of the Rose.
And that is all I know about the flower;
I have eaten it—it has disappeared.
There is no Rose."

Young Smollet Smith let fall his glass; he said
"Oh Jesus, Hasbrouck, am I drunk or dead?"

Hymn to Chance

HOW shall we summon you?
The tiny names of gods will not serve us now,
Nor the magic names of the various sons of gods,
Nor the names of their mothers murmured tenderly,
Nor the masks of creatures which you have assumed.
Gray hands enfolding all our lives,
Gray hands, caress the stumbling of our tongues.

Lord Gardener, you have made our lives arise,
Thin shoots of green articulated bone,
Growing and bending and falling under your breath.
You have grafted on these stems our nervy flesh
Enriched with blood and our slow-blooming brains;
You have made our fingers wise with restlessness.
You have laid the earth out and the sea and the lower skies,
You have set us on loose feet beside the earth
That your many colored garden may run wild.
And now from these garnished jaws your garden sings,
Lord Chance,
And your flowers coruscate with blossoming.

Ye are munificent, how shall we count your gifts?
We enumerate like groping babyhood,

For our thoughts are bound and packaged in your hands,
The world is formed and furled in your ceaseless hands,
The hours and days drip from your fingertips,
The ages and our lives fall clustering
And the seasons fall unjustly from your hands.

Lord Prince of Hell, you have given us thought, the worm
Which coils insistently through our too sensate dust.
It is this disease, Lord Death, which corrupts us all,
For we lie to animate our meagreness,
To make us to ourselves less mean
And our companions less like mangled fools.

Lord Costumer, the cabinets of our blood
Have been hung with robes to clothe our nakedness;
You have given us the burning skin of joy,
You have turned our feet from circling slavery
With the brilliance of a dollar thrown in the air.
You have given the close bitter gown of grief,
The acid lining of our joyousness.
You have given us spirit, Lord, we are not abashed,
And we have known quietude when our muscles moved
Smoothly in laboring or in love
And our nerves made harmony of their clamoring.
We have raised ourselves immense memorials,
And our laughter, like your own, has lapped the world.

You have given us the variable one, the infinite and the small,
Which we have repaid with stiff ingratitude.
We have insulted you as Lady Luck;
We have made our lives a foolishness
Because your eyes were neither cool nor kind.
We are the victims of unfounded lust,
We have discovered laws, forgive us, Lord;
Forgive us, Lord, we are neither fine nor swift,
We have not known our proper elegance.
We have said tomorrow comes and the twinkling sun
Will not refuse to flatter us with heat;
We have hid ourselves in minuscules of time.

We have made ourselves low beds in an empty room;
But our beds drift in the dark and our lies dissolve
And there is your face shimmering and your hands
Weaving the chaos where we come and go.

Grand Anarch, there is disrepute for us,
But our words are not disreputable nor mean;
We have spoken for ourselves and our dignity,
Tearing our cheapness from us for a while.
At this moment now, conceive us once again
More suitable to the curving of your hands;
Make us tough and mystical,
Give us such eyes as will penetrate your eyes
And lungs to draw the breath you give to us.
Hear us for we do not beg;
We only pray you heal our idiot ways
And the kind of lonely madness which we have
Of bleeding one another on the road.
We travel in the belly of the wind;
It is you, Lord, who will make us lame or swift.

About Women

FAIR golden thoughts and lovely words—
Away, away from her they call,
For women are the silly birds,
And perching on a sunny wall
They chirp the answer and the all;
They hold for true all futile things—
Life, death, and even love—they fall
To dreaming over jeweled rings.

Their bodies are uncouthly made,
And heavy swollen like a pear,
And yet their conquered, undismayed
And childish lovers call them fair.
Their honor fills them full of care,
Their honor that is nothingness,

The mystery of empty air,
The veil of vain delightfulness.

Their subtleties are thin and pale,
Their hearts betray them in their eyes:
They are a simple flute, and frail,
With triple stops for playing lies.
These poor machines of life are wise
To scorn the metaphysic glow,
The careless game that laughs and dies,
The heady grace they cannot know.

Well, give them kisses, scatter flowers,
And whisper that you cannot stay;
We shall have clarity and hours
Which women shall not take away.

ROBERT HILLYER

Letter to a Teacher of English

JAMES B. MUNN

YOUR learning, James, in classics and romance,
Sits lightlier than most men's ignorance;
But often do I see in our profession
Learning a mere extraneous possession,
An undigested mass of dates and sources
Roll'd round in academe's diurnal courses,
Where scholars prepare scholars, not for life,
But gaudy footnotes and a threadbare wife,—
Keen eyes for errors in a worthless text,
But none at all for this world or the next.

Your modesty, that even tops your learning,
Forbids what I would say of you, so turning
Not, as I hope, from Ghibelline to Guelph,
I will discuss, as is the vogue, myself.

I fall between two stools—I can't say Chairs—
A bard too learn'd, a scholar in arrears.
The critical reviewers, week by week,
Damn poets who command their own technique.
Professor is a title that to them
Begins in laughter and concludes in phlegm.
A careful rhyme, a spondee nobly planned
Is academic, and the work unmanned.
Would that these critics lived in houses fashioned
By carpenters congenially impassioned.
I'd love to see the roof-tree fall on . . . no,
The name is Legion; let us leave it so.
But as a teacher I have equal luck,—
In ponds a chicken and on shore a duck.
My wretched memory, for all my pains,
Drops tons for every ounce that it retains;
Far wiser now, I have less factual knowledge
At forty-one than when I was in college. . . .

Yet there is recompense for knowing well
One language, if it be incomparable.
Disdainful, the Athenian would speak
No other language than his native Greek.
Now his provincial literature is prized
In every barbarous tongue that he despised.
The learned Roman, who knew Greek by heart,
Had twice the scholarship, and half the art.
The great Elizabethans' education
Thrived less on lore than on superb translation.
Our scholars, to whom every root is known,
Command all languages, except their own.
For confirmation, but consult the theses
That year by year bankrupt the college presses.

When poets go, grammarians arrive.
Is Virgil dead? Let commentators thrive.
The gift of tongues without the Holy Ghost
Becomes a Babel, not a Pentecost.
In short, dear James, by now you plainly see
I find no virtue in philology;
At best a sterile hobby, often worse,
The plumes, when language dies, upon its hearse. . . .

Now, James, I stop complaining, I will plan
An education to produce a man.
Make no mistake, I do not want this done,—
My limitations are the cornerstone.
Plato's *Republic* may have served some use
In manuscript, but not in Syracuse,
So let my dream Academy remain
A dream;—I'm sure I do not ask in vain.
First would I have my scholar learn the tongue
He never learned to speak when he was young;
Then would I have him read therein, but merely
In the great books, to understand them clearly.
O that our living literature could be
Our sustenance, not archæology!
Time is the wisest judge, who folds away
The surplus of a too-abundant day.
My scholar shall be brilliantly forbidden
To dig old garbage from a kitchen midden.
Far better Alexandria in flames
Than buried beneath unimportant names,
And even Sappho, glory that was Greece's,
Lives best, I blasphemously think, in pieces.
Surely our sprite, who over Amherst hovered,
Would gain if no more poems were discovered.
That Chinese emperor who burned the books
Succumbed to madness shrewder than it looks;
The minor poets and the minor sages
Went up in smoke; the great shine down the ages.
The Harvard Library's ungainly porch
Has often made me hunger for a torch,

But this not more to simplify a lecture
Than to appease the Muse of architecture.

When music and sweet poetry agree,
Who would be thinking of a Ph.D.?
O who would Ablauts bear, when Brahms's First
Is soon to be performed or but rehearsed?
My scholar must have music in his heart,
Bach and Beethoven, Schumann and Mozart,
Franck and Sibelius, and more like these,
Their works, if not their names, sweet symphonies.
Ah, James, I missed my calling; I would turn
To that one art toward which the others yearn,—
But I observe my neighbor's cow, who leaves
Her fertile pasture for my barren sheaves.
The field next door, the next-door art, will thus
Always attract the mildly covetous.
Yet some day I will play you the main theme
Of the immortal counterpoint I dream:
Clear melody 'n fugue and canon rises
On strings, with many structural surprises.
No letter, but a prelude, for your sake
I would compose beside this tranquil lake.
Its line should rise toward heaven until it broke
Halfway between the sky and the great oak;
Then waver, like a flock of homing birds,
In slow descending flights of minor thirds.
Music alone can set the spirit free
From the dark past and darker things to be.
Could Man be judged by music, then the Lord
Would quench the angel of the flaming sword.
Alas, the final tones so soon disperse
Their echoes through the empty universe,
And hearers, weak from following Beethoven,
Relax with Gershwin, Herbert, and de Koven.

But to return to Polyhymnia,
And incidentally to my student. Ah,
Where is the creature? No, but is that he?
A saxophone is nuzzling on his knee!

His eyes pop out, his bellied cheeks expand,
His foot taps 'Alexander's Ragtime Band.'
Ungraceful and unpardonable wretch!
Was it for you my eager pen would sketch
A new, a sensible curriculum?
Burst with your Panpipes! and we'll both be dumb.
I was about to urge philosophy,
Especially the Greek, I was to be
Your godfather in recommending Faith
To you, fit godson for a Sigmund Spaeth!
Of history and time I was to tell,
Things visible and things invisible,
But what to you are echoes from Nicea,
Who never prayed nor cherished an idea?
And what have you to gain from education,
Blown bellows for unceasing syncopation?
Learning and life are too far wrenched apart,
I cannot reconcile, for all my art,
Studies that go one way and life another,
Tastes that demoralize, and tests that smother.

James, what is this I find? an angry scowl
Sits on my brow like a Palladian owl!
Let me erase it, lest it should transform
The soft horizon with a thunderstorm.
I would you were beside me now, to share
The sound of falling water, the sweet air.
Under the yew a vacant easy chair
Awaits your coming; and long-planted seeds
Begin to bloom amid the encircling weeds.
I bade my student an abrupt adieu
But find it harder to take leave of you.
May we not some day have a mild carouse
In Pontefract instead of Warren House?
The distance nothing,—in two hours' time
Another land where that word's but a rhyme.
Would I were Marvell, then you could not harden
Your heart against a visit to my garden.
I'd write those happy lines about the green

Annihilation, and you'd soon be seen
 Hatless and coatless, bootless,—well, my soul!
 He's in the lake with nothing on at all!
 To sink, to swim, that is the only question:
 Thus ends my treatise on—was it digestion?
 Farewell, and yours sincerely, and yours ever,
 The time has come for the initial shiver.
 When into lakes, as into life, we dive,
 We're fortunate if we come up alive.

LEE ANDERSON

prevailing winds

I The bland many-eyed walls
 of skyscrapers and the modest
 in-between brownstone houses
 shall not bruise the thrust of his rapier spirit
 rather the artist with the intensity of youth
 the prophet's second sight the seer's vision
 shall cause these buildings to shrink and dilate
 lean askew into the ether relax like wilted rubber
 stand and shine
 as the lucent image of an all-seeing god within him

 but never shall suave façade of church and store
 ever divert an eye attending
 every minute of every waking day
 the amazing palette span
 of dioramic grey
 running the scale from brilliant sweep of cornice line
 to leaden asphalt Avenue from arrowhead oyster shell
 cat's eye grey of metal chrome

to warm maternal monotone in archaic gothic cathedral

grey is the dominant the dream tone
 of the city of the artist
 the way these chords and phrases
 of shade and light blend and repeat
 soothes and fires like music
 like music swelling falling
 the grey of a sailing barge and a gull's wing
 of early pewter and newly minted silver
 the grey that sounds like a loon's call
 the ring of thin glass
 and a smothered laugh in summer rain

grey is the dominant the dream tone
 of the urge towards wisdom love and order
 but under city clouds
 design slides easily as if
 what matter if old order hold
 the mood forever

 one alone moves sorrowfully along
 the early twilight sleet and snow aware of confusion
 numbing December cold insolence and hate
 on high and the answer only the artist
 can encompass and only
 while wedged
 like a plume bright flare
 in the spiral shaped hour of making

the bland bonafide letter-perfect literal mind
 and ample counterpart
 on the cat-lipped distaff side
 never divert an ounce of vigor
 from getting and spending or the lending
 of an eye an ear a hand
 to grow beneath obedient kindred sense
 responsive to the last nuance of tone
 and color in tolling bells the blending

organ notes of grey in building stone
 the changing mood and tense of the city
 from hour to hour and day to day
they who out of step out of rhythm
 react in kind with conveyor belt mind

they shall not snare the sculptor
 in the plush thrall of the Avenue
 for he is ruled by the systole diastole
 undulating auguries of seven moon moved oceans
 rather shall his hand cause arrogant square walls
 to warp in the wind to curl and buckle
 under furious thrust

under urgent upward fluent current
 until the plume-bright spiral flare of the sea
 rockets to a heaven of renewal remaking

every minute of every living day
 touch may be talisman to a thousand worlds
 beyond caprice of eye forever seeing earth
 within the compass of horizon blue
 for a hand may reach where eye is blind and know
 as the sculptor knows the planes and lines beneath
 the oblong marble block
 the fourth dimension man
 contained in three dimension stone

oh for a phantom hand at least as wide
 as the spread of a city street a hand to trace
 the Quaker grey cool clay model feel
 of great grey monoliths of stainless steel
 a hand to hold the smooth the rough
 the length breadth thickness mass
 and weight
 . . . to know the tremor of wind stressed tower
 on slow appraising thumb
 oh for a mammoth hand
 to mould cube and dome and octagon edge
 into shapes and planes where light can play

on narrow street and hidden alley way
 . . . for a hand to raise to half again
 the stature of man in the image of master

but under the clouds of the city between rivers
 spirit sinks fruitless barren sapless
 from head to heart to hip to heel
 soaking like rain on drought pocked
 ground
 into glinting piebald paving stone into
 the metallic granite rock on which the city rides

above income sluiced to fumed altar oak
above sweating damp and nausea
blocked in deference to others
in sea swaying homeward bus
 the only important are
 the intemperate dream to evening fervent
 the continuing beat of andante cantabile
 echoing through all of a fruitless follow-
 ing day

while Siphon Sahib is still astride the Veblen
 thunder
 search for immaculate finds rule of thumb
 languid arm aptly draped on parlance
 groping for homily when cornered
 unconscious of undercurrent urge
 gripping like fire an inner silence
 the knowing old order holds defenceless realm

the bland parvenu
 the wool and a yard wide dowager
 of lean temple and February countenance
 these shall not spit and snarl at the dancer
 rather she with a sybil's gift of divination
 foresees an Avenue empty
 of preening idle women for the dancer

shall cause this vapid furtive circumstance
 of burnished leather luggage models of ships
 mandarin lacquer for finger tips
 of diamonds rubies perfumes furs and
 flowers
 and trinkets in trade for idle hours shall cause
 the storms once wracking Lesbos
 to shake the even tenor of tall grey buildings
 like plucked bass viol strings like maddened tim-
 pani

 horn and drum reeling in unison
 with her every motion
it is as if she were afloat as if
 she knew the quick surprise the arrow shock
 of mountain lake in midnight moonlit May
 the deeper warmer offshore current
 tingling against her naked skin
 in darkened ecstasy
 around and about a closely anchored pier

oh for a hand high over roof and spire
 to cup the flint spark stab from sidewalk
 crowds
 in endless ribbon strands
 —unmarked notes above the treble C
 of carillon evensong
 below basso profundo resonant G
 of an ocean slugging the sand bar line
 where city ends and sea begins

grey is the dominant the dream tone
 of the rhythms of the city panelled shadow grey
 in V-shaped diamond shafts of sun aslant
 the bright dust laden air above the street
 the grey of wire thin winter rain against
 warm wool monotones of modest
 in-between brownstone houses
 . . . never shall suave façade
 or letter-perfect literal

ever divert an eye attending
 the grey that sounds like a loon's call
 the ring of thin glass
 and a contralto laugh in summer rain

II

over the hill's brow gazing south and east
 on the whole brewing land there is
 an aura of mystery like a moslem veil
 as air for mastery limes mystic soil

from early April when the scillas rise
 eerily in new apparel until the rose
 enthralling moods of nascent auguries
 ascend from vague wren trill to oriole aria

over the hill's brow the south wind blows
 a strand of hair from face and ear
 and with it dun brown furrows
 of thought-bent thin blown sorrow

—the teasing caressing southwind swirling
 around a smoothly skirted leg
 and wind-pink tingling cheek!
 how glad we are to share the earth
 with whip resilient reddening briar
 and yellow willow how good it is
 simply to be alive to see the last
 reluctant bank of shadowed snow
 give way to first green tuft of grass

to feel our throats repeat
 the quivering tremulous beat
 —April rides prevailing winds

under the full bright moon in May
 nothing sleeps nothing sleeps soundly . . .
 from early April when the scillas rise
 one like her will step from rock to rose

. . . under the full bright moon
with the odor of lilac plum and cherry
pervading all . . .

*as blossom after blossom succeeds surprise
a breast offers bliss exceeding praise*

. . . like heady wine inhaled
every heavy moon burdened flower
becomes blood brother of spellbound beholder
until cloud sweep and pulse flare
sever bond neither could endure further . . .

*plum nut apple lilac cherry locust
a plume night nipple full furry thou likest*

. . . the mirrored light of the delicate opal
of apple petal on arm and shoulder
firefly glowworm and throaty note
of frog in eerie frenzy in the fragrant night . . .

*the moon caressing an elm firm thigh
mons veneris laving in girdle free thought*

. . . all through the night the passion white night
the pitch of life ascends higher and ever higher
from bolero spin of katydid

to meadow wide woodwind symphony
until a halo of light and the first bird call
bind more closely a mating world
with the sleepless lazy lid of hour after hour . . .

*priapus in armour resplendent knowing
piety passes with the earth's renewing*

it is five o'clock in the morning
in the merry month of May
the catbird mocks the bluebird's song
green grass hides bleak brown earth
every bush and branch wears a glad rebirth
and we sing we sing pollee wollee doodle
cock a double duty the live long day

and we loaf on down a wooded lane
for scent of grape our lungs too scant
to grasp the breath of June
we breathe-in hour-long draughts

of wet wild rose and spice wild grape
 watch the big bellied sleepy cat
 and balloon inflated cow

*listen to the counterpoint
 of wind on nape of neck*
 but an octave higher in the tree above
 we think we hear the murmur primitive
 perhaps the mystery of life within life
 without end

over the hill's brow gaze south and east
 at basket woven fields of corn and oats
 see how soothed content the wheat appears
 green against the buckwheat pasture
 like a woman new to children stirred
 by the womb locked growing seed
 to shed an angular maiden gaucherie
 and gain in June a quiet easy grace

. . . oh the fresh milkwarm smell of June!
 with every slow and savored breath
 drink in the day's perfection lest
 in other time either lost in desperate aim
 or fiction we have no memory
 of merry haymow studded field
 sun warm air above ice cold brook
 of one like her who steps from rock to rose
 —breath withheld heart beat skipped
 to behold rebirth all hurt escaped

III

with the harvest in we dance and drink wine
 whosoever fails to celebrate the season
 of gathered wheat and apples nearly ripe
 that little man
 or diminutive woman shall writhe
 under hottest August ever
 but blessings on you if in spite of letters repeating

"why must request for answer
 remain forever unanswered" if you
 far away are high on warm red wine
 a dream astride the city wintered mind

abracadabra a b c
banish literal ale spill spell
and wine spur lateral

her husband's to Asylum gone
scotch and soda arm in arm
she shall come to no great harm
but I'll do and I'll do and I'll do

great apple orchard ardors wax
 as he in shorts and she in slacks
 in ambient attitude appraise
 alternate glare and shade of sun
 their tunics both now quite undone
 for pillowed travel o'er meadow maze
 and mimic dalliance with dappled light
 as though endless days were endless night

at zenith now in state
 the pleasing stallion mane appears
 "darling, I feel so guilty and ashamed"
 "you needn't, you're not to be blamed"
 "it isn't because we are as we are
 but for those who are starved and stunned and bare"
 "your woman's voice is full of woe and war"
 "I cry beware beware"

abracadabra
ale spill spell
literal is banished, "x - y - z - you?"
"nine by the clock and all is well"
"ten by my wrist and all too few"

when the harvest is in we drink and dance
and whosoever fails by chance
to celebrate without reason
this brief inebriate too short season
we "blast with the breath of December
and freeze in tumult to lifeless ember"

blessings on you if in spite of literal
you can and do assemble lateral

IV

this limbic pink whorl of an ear
assembles sound in double role
the thunder and rumble of the sea is heard
in duplicate ring as rambling ground swell
the muted music of waves off shore at night
and the lumbering roar of striking water
a northeaster ramming wind and rain on rock

either it is the mood of the storm
or eon-old instinct augurs the end
of peace for only a month ago
we dozed under hypnotic August sun
now unprovoked attack insult and rabid threat
leave hurricane and hysteria shaping every hour

here on this September beach with sting
of salt spray smarting eyes facing hidden horizon
we inquire
when a bullet finds a mark what sound
may lull the end what quirk of mind will soothe
the quick stab and slow ebb of encumbered breath

remembering
our humble and lowly origin who
could not hear the runic beat of song in speech
or listen to the first blind groping of life

as the race after cold brine breathes ungilled air
answers a sun not glazed by mottled green
but clear—a haven beyond the weaving land line
the grey monotony of everlasting seas

*how can one condense as war nears
to a month to a single day the unspent years?*

from break of day to next day's birth
this star-shaped five pronged hand moulds earth
into contours of exquisite places
where five senses share with seven faces
storm and calm and mirth

under the cool black autumn night
with star shaped hand held pronged to light
the ear cups sound from distant suns as stirring
as tribal drums in dreaming as whirring
mountain blues in southern flight

in women's arms new chords are heard
echoing through breathless surds
uncertainly in exquisite places:
love like the track of light a star traces
following an echoing word

early October rain then sun
turning green to red is one
when this change rings on bone and muscle
blood hears the whisper and rustle
of leaf from scarlet to dun

in October when the breath is held on half
and quarter notes a large round pebbled hurt
wells up from deep beneath the smooth thin plane
whereon we skim like restless water skeet

over the spirit implacable fog
drapes a melancholy shroud of beaded mist
a damp that will not dry on neck or wrist

to hear in the dance when the moon is bright
music and rhyme in marriage rite
the sound of whirling flame as dancers
like white moths seeking final answers
wildly welcome night

AMERICAN POETRY

and never to allow a fear of thirst
 or hunger well rehearsed
 to claim the month of May until dying
 a hand waves like swallows flying
 to say Spring always comes first

in laughter and ribald fun to affront
 by gesture rude and word stone blunt
 peruke and mask of those whose manner
 proclaims they carry the banner
 for bishops who would but can't
 for prissy pretenders thou and thee churchers
 cadging to powers that be pulling the oars
 for plenary purses and both our ears as well

thus zippered into khaki by quaint technique
 of circus stage fife and drum hurdy gurdy
 and apt phrase of sovereign
 he learns the rub of sanded olive drab
 on salted welt

countermarching
 from state to church from gyp
 to honky-tonk priest to prostitute
 his mind under skillfully tautened winch
 and vise on skull toboggans to medieval hell

in febrile nightmare a gauleiter resumes
 fantastic search for gold in perfect teeth
 as heat of auger hollows faultless tooth
 this pinioned head trembles and vibrates
 in idiot palsied shaking until temple
 spurts in throe and blood streams like tears
 a tendon jerks the puppet knee to navel
 heart and lungs are clutched in talon grip of hawk
 hands once whole bend and twist iron chair arm
 in jagged broken gripe until at end
 of eternal second embedded nerve explodes—
 bit rears eyeward to agony of more than mortal rue

when a bullet finds a mark what sounds
may lull the end what quirk of mind will soothe

mind's eye views through snow and mist
a dancer playing toe and wrist
in rhythm with word spoken
but with cadence and melody broken
by a warm laugh kissed

and the queer discovery made
when bud of lilac and apple played
tuning fork notes on hand held to render
to Spring the sign of surrender
in blind man's bluff parade

since October the breath withheld to half
and quarter note we watched the sober close
of Fall

now with wet red mark on first snow
we inquire what sounds are heard by those
seated in concert chair in bland white tie
and striped silk shorts

can the delicate shell of such
an ear assemble sound in double role
and catch the echo of andante largo
against the thunder and rumble of guns?

only to advance beyond this halfway stage
in time beyond the whoring hell
of constant war of cleric and sovereign
pimp and puppet moving in marionette obedience
to lust so deeply buried under conscious mind
they are unaware of how in turn they too
are pulled by hidden strings

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord . . ."
but GOD
has become the recruit and partisan of death

HIS servant a horse-boned mental runt
 whose flaccid jowl weaves in jellied accord
 with barrel paunch is servile
 stone blind a mumbling fool
 a pacifist in time of peace
 cadger to plenary power in war
 a sniveller in prurience while a man dies . . .

enough! a waste to curse in the last hour
 weak men well meaning and of vague good will

rather
 remember our humble aim for unspent time
 out of a tempering of matter and spirit
 to impress design upon a world
 careless of human wish where
 aside from the stars order exists
 within the mind of man alone
 rather in the discipline of rhythm and pattern
 to find an arrowed answer to question still unread

how can one condense as death nears
 to a day or an hour the unlived years?
 how can sprung loin in arc tension speed
 an image of heaven beyond the weaving land line
 where against an amazing palette span
 of dioramic grey in triumph and splendor
 men enter a city designed by the dreams of artists

how hear beyond the sand bar edge
 where city ends and sea begins
 the muted music of waves off shore at night
 and as in a woman's arms
 the quivering tremulous beat of speechless song
 soothing the quick stab
 the slow ebb of encumbered breath
 until a halo of light beyond the hidden horizon
 severs bond neither could endure further

from under wet red mark on first snow
in early April will the scillas rise
to entralling mood to "chorus for survival"
the mystery of life within life without end

EDMUND WILSON

Riverton

HERE am I among elms again—ah, look
How, high above low windows hung with white
Dark on white dwellings, rooted among rock,
They rise like iron ribs that pillar night!
The stars are high again; the night is clear;
The bed rolls with the old uneven floor;
The air is still again—I lie and hear
The river always falling at the door.

—O elms! O river! aid me at this turn—
Their passing makes my late imperative:
They flicker now who frightfully did burn,
And I must tell their beauty while I live.
Changing their grace as water in its flight,
And gone like water; give me then the art,
Firm as night-frozen ice found silver-bright,
That holds the splendor though the days depart.

A House of the Eighties

NO more in dreams as once it draws me there,
All fungus-grown and sunken in damp ground—
No more as once when waking I gazed down
On elms like water-weeds in moonlit air

Or heard the August downpour with its dull full sound—
Drenched hedges and the hillside and the night,
The largest house in sight—
And thought it sunken out of time or drowned
As hulks in Newark Bay are soaked and slowly drown.

—The ugly stained-glass window on the stair,
Dark-panelled dining-room, the guinea fowl's fierce clack,
The great gray cat that on the oven slept—
My father's study with its books and birds,
His scornful tone, his eighteenth-century words,
His green door sealed with baize
—Today I travel back
To find again that one fixed point he kept
And left me for the day
In which this other world of theirs grows dank, decays,
And founders and goes down.

The Voice

On a Friend in a Sanitarium

ALL Virgil's idyls end in sunsets; pale
With death, the past of Dante opens deep;
The men of Shakespeare do not break, they fail;
And Joyce's dreamers always drift asleep.

—Her loved American laughter, male and clear,
That rang so young in London or in Rome—
A quarter-century gone, my fortieth year—
Is mute among those living ghosts at home.

And I who have been among them and who know
The spirit shrunken to its shuttered cell,
Now hear no laughter—only, piercing low,
This voice that always says, "Farewell! sleep well!"

I heard it, dulled with love upon your breast,
I heard it in our peace of summer suns;
I heard it where the long waves of the West
Retard the dark with loud suspended guns;

And even in the white bark of that wood,
Those mountains roped and broken by our race,
Beside those high streams where the horses stood
And watched our strange and desperate embrace.



This blue world with its high wide sky of islands!
Pale cliffs, white cubes, the slender point, the little bay—
And over there, beyond the outer shore,
Its wildness and its silence,
Old kegs and beams of wrecks embedded in hot snows,
Will sink in awful lavender and rose
The red sea-faring sun—
This freedom of the sands, and summer new begun!

—But oh, my dear, among those dunes we lay,
And all the paths we left are drifted smooth
And we shall make no more!—
And death lies underneath
That cuts the world away.



LOUISE BOGAN

*Old Countryside*

BEYOND the hour we counted rain that fell
On the slant shutter, all has come to proof.
The summer thunder, like a wooden bell,
Rang in the storm above the mansard roof,

And mirrors cast the cloudy day along
The attic floor; wind made the clapboards creak.
You braced against the wall to make it strong,
A shell against your cheek.

Long since, we pulled brown oak-leaves to the ground
In a winter of dry trees; we heard the cock
Shout its unplaceable cry, the axe's sound
Delay a moment after the axe's stroke.

Far back, we saw, in the stillest of the year,
The scrawled vine shudder, and the rose-branch show
Red to the thorns, and, sharp as sight can bear,
The thin hound's body arched against the snow.

Summer Wish

*That cry's from the first cuckoo of the year.
I wished before it ceased.*

FIRST VOICE

We call up the green to hide us
This hardened month, by no means the beginning
Of the natural year, but of the shortened span
Of leaves upon the earth. We call upon
The weed as well as the flower: groundsel, stellaria.
It is the month to make the summer wish;
It is time to ask
The wish from summer as always: *It will be,*
It will be.

That tool we have used
So that its haft is smooth; it knows the hand.
Again we lift the wish to its expert uses,
Tired of the bird that calls one long note downward,
And the forest in cast-iron. No longer, no longer,
The season of the lying equinox
Wherein false cock-crow sounds!

SECOND VOICE

In March the shadow
Already falls with a look of summer, fuller
Upon the snow, because the sun at last
Is almost centered. Later, the sprung moss
Is the tree's shadow; under the black spruces
It lies where lately snow lay, bred green from the cold
Cast down from melting branches.

FIRST VOICE

A wish like a hundred others.
You cannot, as once, yearn forward. The blood now never
Stirs hot to memory, or to the fantasy
Of love, with which, both early and late, one lies
As with a lover.
Now do you suddenly envy
Poor praise you told long since to keep its tongue,
Of pride's acquired accent,—pomposity, arrogance,
That trip in their latinity? With these at heart
You could make a wish, crammed with the nobility
Of error. It would be no use. You cannot
Take yourself in.

SECOND VOICE

Count over what these days have: lilies
Returned in little to an earth unready,
To the sun not accountable;
The hillside mazed and leafless, but through the ground
The leaf from the bulb, the unencouraged green
Heaving the metal earth, presage of thousand
Shapes of young leaves—lanceolate, trefoil,
Peach, willow, plum, the lilac like a heart.

FIRST VOICE

Memory long since put by,—to what end the dream
That drags back lived-out life with the wrong words,
The substitute meaning?

Those that you once knew there play out false time,
Elaborate yesterday's words, that they were deaf to,
Being dead ten years.—Call back in anguish
The anger in childhood that defiled the house
In walls and timber with its violence?
Now must you listen again
To your own tears, shed as a child, hold the bruise
With your hand, and weep, fallen against the wall,
And beg, *Don't, don't*, while the pitiful rage goes on
That cannot stem itself?
Or, having come into woman's full estate,
Enter the rich field, walk between the bitter
Bowed grain, being compelled to serve,
To heed unchecked in the heart the reckless fury
That tears fresh day from day, destroys its traces,—
Now bear the blow too young?

SECOND VOICE

In early April
At six o'clock the sun has not set; on the walls
It shines with scant light, pale, dilute, misplaced,
Light there's no use for. At overcast noon
The sun comes out in a flash, and is taken
Slowly back to the cloud.

FIRST VOICE

Not memory, and not the renewed conjecture
Of passion that opens the breast, the unguarded look
Flaying clean the raped defence of the body,
Breast, bowels, throat, now pulled to the use of the eyes
That see and are taken. The body that works and sleeps,
Made vulnerable, night and day, to delight that changes
Upon the lips that taste it, to the lash of jealousy
Struck on the face, so the betraying bed
Is gashed clear, cold on the mind, together with
Every embrace that agony dreads but sees
Open as the love of dogs.

SECOND VOICE

The cloud shadow flies up the bank, but does not
Blow off like smoke. It stops at the bank's edge.
In the field by trees two shadows come together.
The trees and the cloud throw down their shadow upon
The man who walks there. Dark flows up from his feet
To his shoulders and throat, then has his face in its mask,
Then lifts.

FIRST VOICE

Will you turn to yourself, proud breast,
Sink to yourself, to an ingrained, pitiless
Rejection of voice and touch not your own, press sight
Into a myth no eye can take the gist of;
Clot up the bone of phrase with the black conflict
That claws it back from sense?

Go into the breast . . .

You have traced that lie, before this, out to its end,
Heard bright wit headstrong in the beautiful voice
Changed to a word mumbled across the shoulder
To one not there; the gentle self split up
Into a yelling fiend and a soft child.
You have seen the ingrown look
Come at last upon a vision too strong
Ever to turn away.

The breast's six madnesses repeat their dumb-show.

SECOND VOICE

In the bright twilight children call out in the fields.
The evening takes their cry. How late it is!
Around old weeds worn thin and bleached to their pith
The field has leaped to stalk and strawberry blossom.
The orchard by the road
Has the pear-tree full at once of flowers and leaves,
The cherry with flowers only.

FIRST VOICE

The mind for refuge, the grain of reason, the will,
Pulled by a wind it thinks to point and name?
Malicious symbol, key for rusty wards,
The crafty knight in the game, with its mixed move,
Prey to an end not evident to craft. . . .

SECOND VOICE

Fields are ploughed inward
From edge to center; furrows squaring off
Make dark lines far out in irregular fields,
On hills that are builded like great clouds that over them
Rise, to depart.
Furrow within furrow, square within a square,
Draw to the center where the team turns last.
Horses in half-ploughed fields
Make earth they walk upon a changing color.

FIRST VOICE

The year's begun; the share's again in the earth.

Speak out the wish like music, that has within it
The horn, the string, the drum pitched deep as grief.
Speak it like laughter, outward. O brave, O generous
Laughter that pours from the well of the body and draws
The bane that cheats the heart: aconite, nightshade,
Hellebore, hyssop, rue,—symbols and poisons
We drink, in fervor, thinking to gain thereby
Some difference, some distinction.
Speak it, as that man said, *as though the earth spoke*,
By the body of rock, shafts of heaved strata, separate,
Together.

Though it be but for sleep at night,
Speak out the wish.
The vine we pitied is in leaf; the wild
Honeysuckle blows by the granite.

SECOND VOICE

See now

Open above the field, stilled in wing-stiffened flight,
The stretched hawk fly.

HORACE GREGORY

Fortune for Mirabel

TELL, tell our fortune, Mirabel,
Shuffle the pack and cut
Cards spread face upward on the carpet
Over the faded green sweet and violet pastures:
The hour-glass, time, the blonde girl and brunette.
Give us good cards tonight: the faces
Beautiful and new—and love, Mirabel,
The pink heart pierced and the great round yellow sun;
We shall be rich tonight: laurels for fame,
The gold-mine falling from your right hand,
And O the lute and ribbons and the harp!

—Not the unopened letter nor the blind eye
Nor the fire card bright as war flowing through Spain
Nor the lightning card, troopship in storm
Nor the quick arrow pointing nowhere to the sky.
Not now tonight and not the spotted devil,
The faithless dancing psychiatric patient,
Who wept, always the lover, not the man,
Sold the pawn ticket—not tonight, Mirabel,
Not the deep cypress vista and the urn,
The kidnapped ten-year-old, the head
In pear tree branches and one delicate frosted hand
On the back stair

They looked like power and fame,
 like love, like everything you need;
 and you would think their looks would put them where
 they could dictate a letter or run a bank
 or kiss a microphone or float a yacht or sleep in
 a genuine imitation Marie Antoinette bed
 or get somewhere before they die
 instead of dropping into dreams too deep
 to tell themselves who, what, or where they are
 until a fire turns them out into the street
 or a shot is heard and the police are at the door.

Chorus for Survival

XIV

ASK no return for love that's given
 embracing mistress, wife or friend,
 ask no return:
 on this deep earth or in pale heaven,
 awake and spend
 hands, lips, and eyes in love,
 in darkness burn,
 the limbs entwined until the soul ascend.

Ask no return of seasons gone:
 the fire of autumn and the first hour of spring,
 the short bough blossoming
 through city windows when night's done,
 when fears adjourn
 backward in memory where all loves end

in self again, again the inward tree
 growing against the heart
 and no heart free.
 From love that sleeps behind each eye
 in double symmetry
 ask no return,

even in enmity, look! I shall take your hand;
nor can our limbs disjoin in separate ways again,
walking, even at night on foreign land
through houses open to the wind, through cold and rain,
waking alive, meet, kiss and understand.

MALCOLM COWLEY

Stone Horse Shoals

“**T**O wade the sea-mist, then to wade the sea
at dawn, let drift your garments one by one,
follow the clean stroke of a sea-gull’s wing
breast-high against the sun;
follow a sail to sunward, slowly nearing
the lazy lobster boats at Stone Horse Shoals,
and pass them silent, on a strong ebb-tide
into an ocean empty to the poles.”

The tall man clenched his eyes against the world;
his face was gray and shook like a torn sail.
“I have lived,” he said, “a life that moved in spirals
turned inward like the shell of a sea-snail.
I have been the shadow at the heart of shadows,
I have stared too many years at my own face;
on Stone Horse Shoals, among the lobster boats,
I will shed my carapace.

“Something will die there, something move and watch
its shadow fathoms downward on the sand,
summer and winter. In another season
another man comes wading to the land,
where other blossoms fade among the dunes
and other children. . . . I am tired,” he said,

"But I can see a naked body climbing
a naked seacoast, naked of the dead,

"naked of language. There are signs inscribed
on stones and trees, familiar vocables;
I hope to rise out of the sea as white,
as empty and chalk-smooth as cockleshells.
And children digging naked in the sand
will find my shell and on it scratch new words
that soon will blossom out," he said, "and bear
new fruit, strange to the tongue of men and birds."

The Long Voyage

NOT that the pines were darker there,
nor mid-May dogwood brighter there,
nor swifts more swift in summer air;
it was my own country,

having its thunderclap of spring,
its long midsummer ripening,
its corn hoar-stiff at harvesting,
almost like any country,

yet being mine; its face, its speech,
its hills bent low within my reach,
its river birch and upland beech
were mine, of my own country.

Now the dark waters at the bow
fold back, like earth against the plow;
foam brightens like the dogwood now
at home, in my own country.

Eight Melons

AUGUST and on the vine eight melons sleeping,
drinking the sunlight, sleeping, while below
their roots obscurely work in the dark loam;

motionless center of the living garden,
eight belly-shaped, eight woman-colored melons
swelling and feeding the seeds within them. Guns

west of the mountain at the Frenchman's Bridge;
they are fighting now at the cold river, they
are dying for tomorrow. While the melons

sleep, smile in sleeping, in their bellies hoard
September sweetness, life to outlast the snow.

THEODORE SPENCER

Song

II WHO love you bring
Against our cherishing
These faults I daren't deny
Lest love should prove a lie.
*But Oh, if you love me forgive me,
And none of this is true.*

A too resilient mind
That seeking fact, must find
Reasons on every side
Why fact should be denied.
*But Oh, if you love me forgive me,
And none of this is true.*

A body that has wooed
More pleasure than it should,
And for that pleasure sought
What it had thrived without.

*But Oh, if you love me, forgive me,
And none of this is true.*

And until now, a soul
That could find no goal
Beyond body and mind;
And so turned blind.

*But Oh, if you love me, forgive me,
And none of this is true.*

A Reason for Writing

NO word that is not flesh, he said,
Can hold my wavering ear; but when
That golden physical flesh is clear,
*I dance in a glory like your glory
With force to stir the dead.*

No word that is not thought, he said,
Can hook my slippery mind; but when
That silver accurate thought I find,
*I dance in a glory like your glory
With force to stir the dead.*

Words both flesh and thought, he said,
Hold and hook my heart; and when
The gold, the silver, shudder apart,
*Still in a glory like your glory
I'll dance to stir the dead.*

Spring Song

I HAVE come again, gentlemen and ladies,
Whatever you call me, ladies, gentlemen;
Dancing, dancing down, sweet ladies,
And up with a dance I come, kind gentlemen;
I am here; we are dancing again.

Brown leaf on a dust-hill, ladies, ladies;
A running ant from the dust-hill, gentlemen;
Look out of the window; here I am;
Look back to the bedroom; here I am.
Sleep; and we'll fall together, gentlemen—
Falling towers and crumpled gowns
To a dust, a most sleepy dust, ladies,
From towers and golden gowns. But sleep,
Oh sleep again, and I'll promise you green,
A green, shattering sun-blade green,
With a daffodil prance like forever, gentlemen.
Forever a tower of gold like a daffodil.

I have come again, gentlemen and ladies;
Whatever you call me, a leaf and a dust-hill;
Dancing up, gentlemen, sweet ladies;
And dancing down, ladies, kind gentlemen.
I am here; we are dancing again.

R. P. BLACKMUR

All Things Are a Flowing

FLOWERS do better here than peas and beans,
Here nothing men may save can save its mark;

Reason a glitter flowing blues to greens
Beyond the offshore shoals gains ocean dark.
The poor within us climb the cliff and stare
Through second eyes and are sea-beggared there.

Sun warms the flesh, but in the marrow, wind;
The seagulls over head and neater tern
Scream woodthrush in the birches out of mind.
How warm a marrow cold enough to burn!
There is no shelter here, no self-warm lair,
When every lung eddies the ocean air.

All's weather here and sure, visible change;
It is the permutation of the stone,
The inner crumbling of the mountain range,
Breathes in our ears sea rôle and moan.
And this the steadied heart, our own, must bear:
Suncalm and stormcalm, both in breathless air.

Here men wear natural colours, mostly blue,
Colour of fusion, shade of unison,
Colour of nothingness seen twice, come true,
Colour the gods must be that come undone:
Colour of succour and mirage, O snare
And reservoir, death ravens in arrear.

Half-Tide Ledge

SUNDAY the sea made morning worship, sang
Venite, Kyrie, and a long Amen,
over a flowing cassock did put on
glittering blindness, surplice of the sun.
Towards high noon her eldest, high-run tide
rebelled at formal song and in the Sanctus
made heavy heavy mockery of God,
and I, almost before I knew it, saw
the altar ledges of the Lord awash.
These are the obsequies I think on most.

Scarabs for the Living

I

O SAILOR sailor tell me why
though in the seawine of your eye
I see nothing dead and nothing die
I know from the stillness seething there
my heart's hope is my soul's despair.

II

To meditate upon the tiger, turn
your human eyes from his past-human stare;
beyond his cage a pigeon tops an urn,
beyond the pigeon falls the twilight air,
and there, steadfast, he sees a viewless lair.

III

Lay down one hand before you like a tool
and let the other, in your mind, grow strange;
then let the strangers meet. Who but a fool
or a passionate man, thinks loss is blood-exchange,
if the cold hand should warm and the hot cool!

IV

Within this windless covert silence drops
leaf by leaf and birches make bare bones;
a startled woodcock's whistling flight new-stops
the wind beyond the woods, and I, alone,
feel my still flight trembling into stone.

V

There is, besides the warmth, in this new love—
besides the radiance, the spring—the chill
that in the old had seemed the slow, the still
amounting up of that indifferent will
in which we die. I keep last winter's glove.

VI

Oh, I was honest in the womb
where I had neither time nor room
nor any secret hope to hide.
Now there are love and work this side
of honesty, two hopes that lied.

VII

The chickadee-dee-dee is not a bird
like stilted heron fishing minnie pools
that in their fleeing shriek the sky like fools;
the chickadee (dee-dee) is most a word
to keep the thicket warm when summer cools.

VIII

It is the slow encroachment, word by word,
of sleep upon the wakened mind, the slow
manoeuvre of unseemly vertigo,
whereby disease in order is inferred;
and in the sleep a blotting fall of snow.

IX

Quiet the self, and silence brims like spring:
the soaking in of light, the gathering

of shadow up, after each passing cloud,
the green life eating into death aloud,
the hum of seasons; all on beating wing.

JOHN PEALE BISHOP

A Recollection

FAMOUSLY she descended, her red hair
Unbound and bronzed by sea-reflections, caught
Crinkled with sea-pearls. The fine slender taut
Knees that let down her feet upon the air,

Young breasts, slim flanks and golden quarries were
Odder than when the young distraught
Unknown Venetian, painting her portrait, thought
He'd not imagined what he painted there.

And I too commerced with that golden cloud:
Lipped her delicious hands and had my ease
Faring fantastically, perversely proud.

All loveliness demands our courtesies.
Since she was dead I praised her as I could
Silently, among the Barberini bees.

Fiametta

FIAMETTA walks under the quincebuds
In a gown the color of flowers;
Her small breasts shine through the silken stuff
Like raindrops after showers.
The green hem of her dress is silk, but duller
Than her eye's green color.

Her shadow restores the grass's green—
Where the sun had gilded it;
The air has given her copper hair
The sanguine that was requisite.
Whatever her flaws, my lady
Has no fault in her young body.

She leans with her long slender arms
To pull down morning upon her—
Fragrance of quince, white light and falling cloud.
The day shall have lacked due honor
Until I shall have rightly praised
Her standing thus with slight arms upraised.

Admonition

LOCK your bedroom doors with terror.
Comb your hair between two lights.
In the gold Venetian chamber
But for them let all be sombre.
Sit, and see reflected lights
Color time within your mirror.

Comb, comb, your bright hair. Rain
Fiery threads upon a shadow.
Stare until you see dilated
Eyes stare out as once the excited
Young men coming out of shadow,
Stared into a burning pain.

Find the loveliest shroud you own.
Stilt a ceremonious
Height on gilded heels. Then summon
To a rarity grown common
Starved arachnid, the dead-louse
And whatever feeds on bone.

The Return

NIGHT and we heard heavy cadenced hoofbeats
Of troops departing; the last cohorts left
By the North Gate. That night some listened late
Leaning their eyelids toward Septentrion.

Morning blared and the young tore down the trophies
And warring ornaments: arches were strong
And in the sun but stone; no longer conquest
Circled our columns; all our state was down

In fragments. In the dust, old men with tufted
Eyebrows whiter than sunbaked faces gulped
As it fell. But they no more than we remembered
The old sea-fights, the soldiers' names and sculptors'.

We did not know the end was coming: nor why
It came; only that long before the end
Were many wanted to die. Then vultures starved
And sailed more slowly in the sky.

We still had taxes. Salt was high. The soldiers
Gone. Now there was much drinking and lewd
Houses all night loud with riot. But only
For a time. Soon the taverns had no roofs.

Strangely it was the young, the almost boys,
Who first abandoned hope; the old still lived
A little, at last a little lived in eyes.
It was the young whose child did not survive.

Some slept beneath the simulacra, until
The gods' faces froze. Then was fear.
Some had response in dreams, but morning restored
Interrogation. Then O then, O ruins!

Temples of Neptune invaded by the sea
And dolphins streaked like streams sportive

As sunlight rode and over the rushing floors
The sea unfurled and what was blue raced silver.

YVOR WINTERS

Heracles

Note: Heracles is treated as a sungod, the treatment being based on the discussion in Anthon's Classical Dictionary.

EURYSTHEUS, trembling, called me to the throne,
Alcmena's son, heavy with thews and still.
He drove me on my fatal road alone:
I went, subservient to Hera's will.

For, when I had resisted, she had struck
Out of the sky and spun my wit: I slew
My children, quicker than a stroke of luck,
With motion lighter than my sinew knew.

Compelled down ways obscure with analogue
To force the Symbols of the Zodiac—
Bright Lion, Boundless Hydra, Fiery Dog—
I spread them on my arms as on a rack:

Spread them and broke them in the groaning wood,
And yet the Centaur stung me from afar,
His blood envenomed with the Hydra's blood:
Thence was I outcast from the earthy war.

Nessus the Centaur, with his wineskin full,
His branch and thyrsus, and his fleshy grip—
Her whom he could not force he yet could gull,
And she drank poison from his bearded lip.

Older than man, evil with age, is life:
Injustice, direst perfidy, my bane
Drove me to win my lover and my wife;
By love and justice I at last was slain.

The numbered Beings of the wheeling track
I carried singly to the empty throne,
And yet, when I had come exhausted back,
Was forced to wait without the gate, alone.

Commanded thus to pause before the gate,
I felt from my hot breast the tremors pass,
White flame dissecting the corrupted State,
Eurystheus vibrant in his den of brass:

Vibrant with horror, though a jewelled king,
Lest, the heat mounting, madness turn my brain
For one dry moment, and the palace ring
With crystal terror ere I turn again.

This stayed me, too: my life was not my own,
But I my life's; a god I was, not man.
Grown Absolute, I slew my flesh and bone;
Timeless, I knew the Zodiac my span.

This was my grief, that out of grief I grew—
Translated as I was from earth at last,
From the sad pain that Deïanira knew.
Transmuted slowly in a fiery blast,

Perfect, and moving perfectly, I raid
Eternal silence to eternal ends:
And Deïanira, an imperfect shade,
Retreats in silence as my arc descends.

Sonnet to the Moon

NOW every leaf, though colorless, burns bright
With disembodied and celestial light,
And drops without a movement or a sound
A pillar of darkness to the shifting ground.

The lucent, thin, and alcoholic flame
Runs in the stubble with a nervous aim,
But, when the eye pursues, will point with fire
Each single stubble-tip and strain no higher.

O triple goddess! Contemplate my plight!
Opacity, my fate! Change, my delight!
The yellow tom-cat, sunk in shifting fur,
Changes and dreams, a phosphorescent blur.

Sullen I wait, but still the vision shun.
Bodiless thoughts and thoughtless bodies run.

Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight

R EPTILIAN green the wrinkled throat,
Green as a bough of yew the beard;
He bent his head, and so I smote;
Then for a thought my vision cleared.

The head dropped clean; he rose and walked;
He fixed his fingers in the hair;
The head was unabashed and talked;
I understood what I must dare.

His flesh, cut down, arose and grew.
He bade me wait the season's round,
And then, when he had strength anew,
To meet him on his native ground.

The year declined; and in his keep
I passed in joy a thriving yule;
And whether waking or in sleep,
I lived in riot like a fool.

He beat the woods to bring me meat.
His lady, like a forest vine,
Grew in my arms; the growth was sweet;
And yet what thoughtless force was mine!

By practice and conviction formed,
With ancient stubbornness ingrained,
Although her body clung and swarmed,
My own identity remained.

Her beauty, lithe, unholy, pure
Took shapes that I had never known;
And had I once been insecure,
Had grafted laurel in my bone.

And then, since I had kept the trust,
Had loved the lady, yet was true,
The knight withheld his giant thrust
And let me go with what I knew.

I left the green bark and the shade,
Where growth was rapid, thick, and still;
I found a road that men had made
And rested on a drying hill.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

Train Ride

AFTER rain, through afterglow, the unfolding fan
of a railway landscape sidled on the pivot
of a larger arc into the green of evening;
I remembered that noon I saw a gradual bud
still white; though dead in its warm bloom;
always the enemy is the foe at home.

And I wondered what surgery could recover
our lost, long stride of indolence and leisure
which is labor in reverse; what physic recalls the smile
not of lips, but of eyes as of the sea bemused.

We, when we disperse from common sleep to several
tasks, we gather to despair; we, who assembled
once for hopes from common toil to dreams
or sickish and hurting or triumphal rapture;
always the enemy is our foe at home.

We, deafened with far scattered city rattles
to the hubbub of forest birds (never having
"had time" to grieve or to hear through vivid sleep
the sea knock on its cracked and hollow stones)
so that the stars, almost, and birds comply,
and the garden-wet; the trees retire; We are
a scared patrol, fearing the guns behind;
always the enemy is the foe at home.

What wonder that we fear our own eyes' look
and fidget to be at home alone, and pitifully
put off age by some change in brushing the hair
and stumble to our ends like smothered runners at their tape;

Then (as while the stars herd to the great trough
the blind, in the always-only-outward of their dismantled
archways, awake at the smell of warmed stone
or to the sound of reeds, lifting from the dim

into their segment of green dawn) *always*
our enemy is our foe at home, more
 certainly than through spoken words or from grief-
 twisted writing on paper, unblotted by tears
 the thought came:

There is no physic
 for the world's ill, nor surgery; it must
 (hot smell of tar on wet salt air)
 burn in a fever forever, an incense pierced
 with arrows, whose name is Love and another name
 Rebellion (the twinge, the gulf, split seconds,
 the very raindrop, render, and instancy
 of Love).

All Poetry to this not-to-be-looked-upon sun
 of Passion is the moon's cupped light; all
 Politics to this moon, a moon's reflected
 cupped light, like the moon of Rome, after
 the deep wells of Grecian light sank low;
always the enemy is the foe at home.

But these three are friends whose arms twine
 without words; as, in a still air,
 the great grove leans to wind, past and to come.

Fish Food

AS you drank deep as Thor, did you think of milk or wine?
 Did you drink blood, while you drank the salt deep?
 Or see through the film of light, that sharpened your rage with
 its stare,
 a shark, dolphin, turtle? Did you not see the Cat
 who, when Thor lifted her, unbased the cubic ground?
 You would drain fathomless flagons to be slaked with vacuum—
 The sea's teats have suckled you, and you are sunk far
 in bubble-dreams, under swaying translucent vines
 of thundering interior wonder. Eagles can never now
 carry parts of your body, over cupped mountains
 as emblems of their anger, embers to fire self-hate
 to other wonders, unfolding white flaming vistas.

Fishes now look upon you, with eyes which do not gossip.
 Fishes are never shocked. Fishes will kiss you, each
 fish tweak you; every kiss takes bits of you away,
 till your bones alone will roll, with the Gulf Stream's swell.
 So has it been already, so have the carpers and puffers
 nibbled your carcass of fame, each to his liking. Now
 in tides of noon, the bones of your thought-suspended structures
 gleam as you intended. Noon pulled your eyes with small
 magnetic headaches; the will seeped from your blood. Seeds
 of meaning popped from the pods of thought. And you fall. And
 the unseen
 churn of Time changes the pearl-hued ocean;
 like a pearl-shaped drop, in a huge water-clock
 falling; from *came* to *go*, from *come* to *went*. And you fell.
 Waters received you. Waters of our Birth in Death dissolve you.
 Now you have willed it, may the Great Wash take you.
 As the Mother-Lover takes your woe away, and cleansing
 grief and you away, you sleep, you do not snore.
 Lie still. Your rage is gone on a bright flood
 away; as, when a bad friend held out his hand
 you said, "Do not talk any more. I know you meant no harm."
 What was the soil whence your anger sprang, who are deaf
 as the stones to the whispering flight of the Mississippi's rivers?
 What did you see as you fell? What did you hear as you sank?
 Did it make you drunken with hearing?
 I will not ask any more. You saw or heard no evil.

 ALLEN TATE

Ode to the Confederate Dead

ROW after row with strict impunity
 The headstones yield their names to the element,
 The wind whirrs without recollection;
 In the riven troughs the splayed leaves

Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumor of mortality.

Autumn is desolation in the plot
Of a thousand acres where these memories grow
From the inexhaustible bodies that are not
Dead, but feed the grass row after rich row.
Think of the autumns that have come and gone!—
Ambitious November with the humors of the year,
With a particular zeal for every slab,
Staining the uncomfortable angels that rot
On the slabs, a wing chipped here, an arm there:
The brute curiosity of an angel's stare
Turns you, like them, to stone,
Transforms the heaving air
Till plunged to a heavier world below
You shift your sea-space blindly
Heaving, turning like the blind crab.

Dazed by the wind, only the wind
The leaves flying, plunge

You know who have waited by the wall
The twilight certainty of an animal,
Those midnight restitutions of the blood
You know—the immitigable pines, the smoky frieze
Of the sky, the sudden call: you know the rage,
The cold pool left by the mounting flood,
Of muted Zeno and Parmenides.
You who have waited for the angry resolution
Of those desires that should be yours tomorrow,
You know the unimportant shrift of death
And praise the vision
And praise the arrogant circumstance
Of those who fall

Rank upon rank, hurried beyond decision—
Here by the sagging gate, stopped by the wall.

Seeing, seeing only the leaves
Flying, plunge and expire

Turn your eyes to the immoderate past,
Turn to the inscrutable infantry rising
Demons out of the earth—they will not last.
Stonewall, Stonewall, and the sunken fields of hemp,
Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run.
Lost in that orient of the thick and fast
You will curse the setting sun.

Cursing only the leaves crying
Like an old man in a storm

You hear the shout, the crazy hemlocks point
With troubled fingers to the silence which
Smothers you, a mummy, in time.

The hound bitch
Toothless and dying, in a musty cellar
Hears the wind only.

Now that the salt of their blood
Stiffens the saltier oblivion of the sea,
Seals the malignant purity of the flood,
What shall we who count our days and bow
Our heads with a commemorial woe
In the ribboned coats of grim felicity,
What shall we say of the bones, unclean,
Whose verdurous anonymity will grow?
The ragged arms, the ragged heads and eyes
Lost in these acres of the insane green?
The gray lean spiders come, they come and go;
In a tangle of willows without light
The singular screech-owl's tight

Invisible lyric seeds the mind
 With the furious murmur of their chivalry.

We shall say only the leaves
 Flying, plunge and expire

We shall say only the leaves whispering
 In the improbable mist of nightfall
 That flies on multiple wing:
 Night is the beginning and the end
 And in between the ends of distraction
 Waits mute speculation, the patient curse
 That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps
 For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

What shall we say who have knowledge
 Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act
 To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave
 In the house? The ravenous grave?

Leave now
 The shut gate and the decomposing wall:
 The gentle serpent, green in the mulberry bush,
 Riots with his tongue through the hush—
 Sentinel of the grave who counts us all!

HART CRANE

Voyages

(II)

AND yet this great wink of eternity,
 Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,

Samite sheeted and processioned where
Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,
Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love;

Take this Sea, whose diapason knells
On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,
The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends
As her demeanors motion well or ill,
All but the pieties of lovers' hands.

And onward, as bells off San Salvador
Salute the crocus lustres of the stars,
In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—
Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,
Complete the dark confessions her veins spell.

Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours,
And hasten while her penniless rich palms
Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,—
Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire,
Close round one instant in one floating flower.

Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe.
O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,
Bequeath us to no earthly shore until
Is answered in the vortex of our grave
The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise.

The River

(from *The Bridge*)

STICK your patent name on a signboard
brother—all over—going west—young man
Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads
and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped
in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams what?

. . . and
past the din
and slogans
of the year —

Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
 save me the wing for if it isn't
 Erie it ain't for miles around a
 Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on
 Thomas

a Ediford—and whistling down the tracks
 a headlight rushing with the sound—can you
 imagine—while an express makes time like
 SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
 RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE
 WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR
 WIRES OR EVEN RUNNING brooks connecting ears
 and no more sermons windows flashing roar
 Breathtaking—as you like it . . . eh?

So the 20th Century—so
 whizzed the Limited—roared by and left
 three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly
 watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip-
 ping gimleted and neatly out of sight.

*

The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas
 Loped under wires that span the mountain stream.
 Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision
 Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.
 But some men take their liquor slow—and count
 —Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue—
 The river's minute by the far brook's year.
 Under a world of whistles, wires and steam
 Caboose-like they go ruminating through
 Ohio, Indiana—blind baggage—
 To Cheyenne tagging . . . Maybe Kalamazoo.

*to those
 whose ad-
 dresses are
 never near*

Time's rendings, time's blendings they construe
 As final reckonings of fire and snow;
 Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist
 Of unwall'd winds they offer, singing low
My Old Kentucky Home and Casey Jones,

Some Sunny Day. I heard a road-gang chanting so.
 And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,
 "Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days!" And sped
 High in a cloud of merriment, recalled
 "—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled," he
 drawled—
 "It was almost Louisiana, long ago."

"There's no place like Booneville though, Buddy,"
 One said, excising a last burr from his vest,
 "—For early troutng." Then peering in the can,
 "—But I kept on the tracks." Possessed, resigned,
 He trod the fire down pensively and grinned,
 Spreading dry shingles of a beard. . . .

Behind

My father's cannery works I used to see
 Rail-squatters ranged in nomad rallery,
 The ancient men—wifeless or runaway
 Hobo-trekkers that forever search
 An empire wilderness of freight and rails.
 Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,
 Holding to childhood like some termless play.
 John, Jake or Charley, hopping the slow freight
 —Memphis to Tallahassee—riding the rods,
 Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.
 From pole to pole across the hills, the states
 —They know a body under the wide rain;
 Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates
 With racetrack jargon,—dotting immensity
 They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast
 Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—
 Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west.
 —As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,

*but who
 have touched
 her, knowing
 her without
 name*

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame
 (O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)

Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her
name.

Trains sounding the long blizzards out—I heard
Wail into distances I knew were hers.

Papooses crying on the wind's long mane
Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,
—Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,
The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain
And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.
Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,
Propitiate them for their timber torn
By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!
They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

*nor the
myths of her
fathers . . .*

And Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel
From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—
Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.
You have a half-hour's wait at Siskiyou,
Or stay the night and take the next train through.
Southward, near Cairo passing, you can see
The Ohio merging,—borne down Tennessee;
And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk
Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk
—As though the waters breathed that you might
know

Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.

Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down,
As though you touched hands with some ancient
clown,

—A little while gaze absently below
And hum *Deep River* with them while they go.

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look see,
O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—

Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,
For you, too, feed the River timelessly.
And few evade full measure of their fate;
Always they smile out eerily what they seem.
I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—
Dan Midland—jolted from the cold brake-beam.

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea; even stone
Is not more hushed by gravity . . . But slow,
As loth to take more tribute—sliding prone
Like one whose eyes were buried long ago

The River, spreading, flows—and spends your
dream.
What are you, lost within this tideless spell?
You are your father's father, and the stream—
A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days—
Nights turbid, vascular with silted shale
And roots surrendered down of moraine clays:
The Mississippi drinks the farthest dale.

O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight!
The basalt surface drags a jungle grace
Ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthening might;
Patience! and you shall reach the biding place!

Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors
Throb past the City storied of three thrones.
Down two more turns the Mississippi pours
(Anon tall ironsides up from salt lagoons)

And flows within itself, heaps itself free.
All fades but one thin skyline 'round . . . Ahead

No embrace opens but the stinging sea;
The River lifts itself from its long bed,

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow
Tortured with history, its one will—flow!
—The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and
slow,
Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

The Dance

(from *The Bridge*)

THE swift red flesh, a winter king—
Who squired the glacier woman down the sky
She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;
She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die.

And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands
With mineral wariness found out the stone
Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands?
He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne.

Mythical brows we saw retiring—loth,
Disturbed and destined, into denser green.
Greeting they sped us, on the arrow's oath:
Now lie incorrigibly what years between . . .

There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;
There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride—
O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May;
And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.

I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue
First moth of evening take wing stealthily.

*Then you
shall see her
truly—your
blood
remembering
its first
invasion of
her secrecy,
its first
encounters
with her kin,
her chieftain
lover . . . his
shade that
haunts the
lakes and
hills*

What laughing chains the water wove and threw!
I learned to catch the trout's moon whisper; I
Drifted how many hours I never knew,
But, watching, saw that fleet young crescent die,—

And one star, swinging, take its place, alone,
Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass—
Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn.
I left my sleek boat nibbling margin grass . . .

I took the portage climb, then chose
A further valley-shed; I could not stop.
Feet nozzled wat'ry webs of upper flows;
One white veil gusted from the very top.

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;
Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends
And northward reaches in that violet wedge
Of Adirondacks!—wisped of azure wands,

Over how many bluffs, tarns, streams I sped!
—And knew myself within some boding shade:—
Grey tepees tufting the blue knolls ahead,
Smoke swirling through the yellow chestnut
glade . . .

A distant cloud, a thunder-bud—it grew,
That blanket of the skies: the padded foot
Within,—I heard it; 'til its rhythm drew,
—Siphoned the black pool from the heart's hot root!

A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest,
Swooping in eagle feathers down your back;
Know, Maquokeeta, greeting; know death's best;
—Fall, Sachem, strictly as the tamarack!

A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.
The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves;
The long moan of a dance is in the sky. . .
Dance, Maquokeeta: Pocahontas grieves . . .

And every tendon scurries toward the twangs
Of lightning deltaed down your saber hair.
Now snaps the flint in every tooth; red fangs
And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air . . .

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!
Spark, tooth! Medicine-man, relent, restore—
Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!

Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on—
O yelling battlements,—I, too, was liege
To rainbows currying each pulsant bone:
Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege!

And buzzard-circleted, screamed from the stake;
I could not pick the arrows from my side.
Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake—
Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.

I heard the hush of lava wrestling your arms,
And stag teeth foam about the raven throat;
Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms
Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat.

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,
That drops his legs and colors in the sun,
—And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon
Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!

And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny
Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent
At last with all that's consummate and free
There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent.

*

Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean,
Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze—
Across what bivouacs of thin angered slain,
And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize!

Totem and fire-gall, slumbering pyramid—
 Though other calendars now stack the sky,
 Thy freedom is her largesse, Prince, and hid
 On paths thou knewest best to claim her by.

High unto Labrador the sun strikes free
 Her speechless dream of snow, and stirred again,
 She is the torrent and the singing tree;
 And she is virgin to the last of men . . .

West, west and south! winds over Cumberland
 And winds across the llano grass resume
 Her hair's warm sibilance. Her breasts are fanned
 O stream by slope and vineyard—into bloom!

And when the caribou slant down for salt
 Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine
 Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault
 Of dusk?—And are her perfect brows to thine?

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
 In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .
 Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
 The serpent with the eagle in the boughs.

Indiana

(from *The Bridge*)

THE morning-glory, climbing the morning long
 Over the lintel on its wiry vine,
 Closes before the dusk, furls in its song
 As I close mine . . .

*. . . and
 read her in its
 mother's
 farewell
 gaze.*

And bison thunder rends my dreams no more
 As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you
 Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door . . .
 Your father knew

Then, though we'd buried him behind us, far
Back on the gold trail—then his lost bones
stirred . . .

But you who drop the scythe to grasp the oar
Knew not, nor heard.

How we, too, Prodigal, once rode off, too—
Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye . . .
We found God lavish there in Colorado
But passing sly.

The pebbles sang, the firecat slunk away
And glistening through the sluggard freshets came
In golden syllables loosed from the clay
His gleaming name.

A dream called Eldorado was his town,
It rose up shambling in the nuggets' wake,
It had no charter but a promised crown
Of claims to stake.

But we,—too late, too early, howsoever—
Won nothing out of fifty-nine—those years—
But gilded promise, yielded to us never,
And barren tears . . .

The long trail back! I huddled in the shade
Of wagon-tenting looked out once and saw
Bent westward, passing on a stumbling jade
A homeless squaw—

Perhaps a halfbreed. On her slender back
She cradled a babe's body, riding without rein.
Her eyes, strange for an Indian's, were not black
But sharp with pain

And like twin stars. They seemed to shun the gaze
Of all our silent men—the long team line—
Until she saw me—when their violet haze
Lit with love shine . . .

I held you up—I suddenly the bolder,
Knew that mere words could not have brought us
nearer.

She nodded—and that smile across her shoulder
Will still endear her

As long as Jim, your father's memory, is warm.

Yes, Larry, now you're going to sea, remember
You were the first—before Ned and this farm,—
First-born, remember—

And since then—all that's left to me of Jim
Whose folks, like mine, came out of Arrowhead.
And you're the only one with eyes like him—
Kentucky bred!

I'm standing still, I'm old, I'm half of stone!
Oh, hold me in those eyes' engaging blue;
There's where the stubborn years gleam and atone,—
Where gold is true!

Down the dim turnpike to the river's edge—
Perhaps I'll hear the mare's hoofs to the ford . . .
Write me from Rio . . . and you'll keep your
pledge;
I know your word!

Come back to Indiana—not too late!
(Or will you be a ranger to the end?)
Good-bye . . . Good-bye . . . oh, I shall always
wait
You, Larry, traveller—
stranger,
son,
—my friend—

Atlantis(from *The Bridge*)

*Music is then the knowledge of that which
relates to love in harmony and system.*

—PLATO

THROUGH the bound cable strands, the arching path
Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,—
Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate
The whispered rush, telepathy of wires.
Up the index of night, granite and steel—
Transparent meshes—fleckless the gleaming staves—
Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream
As though a god were issue of the strings. . . .

And through that cordage, threading with its call
One arc synoptic of all tides below—
Their labyrinthine mouths of history
Pouring reply as though all ships at sea
Complicated in one vibrant breath made cry,—
“Make thy love sure—to weave whose song we ply!”
—From black embankments, moveless soundings hailed,
So seven oceans answer from their dream.

And on, obliquely up bright carrier bars
New octaves trestle the twin monoliths
Beyond whose frosted capes the moon bequeaths
Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)—
Onward and up the crystal-flooded aisle
White tempest nets file upward, upward ring
With silver terraces the humming spars,
The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars.

Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls stung with rime—
Slit and propelled by glistening fins of light—

Pick biting way up towering looms that press
Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade
—Tomorrows into yesteryear—and link
What cipher-script of time no traveller reads
But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,
Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears.

Like hails, farewells—up planet-sequined heights
Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyre:
Serenely, sharply up the long anvil cry
Of inchling æons silence rivets Troy.
And you, aloft there—Jason! hesting Shout!
Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!
Silvery the rushing wake, surpassing call,
Beams yelling Æolus! splintered in the straits!

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,
Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage, tensely spare—
Bridge, lifting night to cycloramic crest
Of deepest day—O Choir, translating time
Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
In myriad syllables,—Psalm of Cathay!
O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm . . . !

We left the haven hanging in the night—
Sheened harbor lanterns backward fled the keel.
Pacific here at time's end, bearing corn,—
Eyes stammer through the pangs of dust and steel.
And still the circular, indubitable frieze
Of heaven's meditation, yoking wave
To kneeling wave, one song devoutly binds—
The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!

O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits
The agile precincts of the lark's return;
Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing
In single chrysalis the many twain,—

Of stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow
And like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom—
Sight, sound and flesh Thou ledest from time's realm
As love strikes clear direction for the helm.

Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth
Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound,—
O River-throated—iridescently upborne
Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins;
With white escarpments swinging into light,
Sustained in tears the cities are endowed
And justified conclamant with ripe fields
Revolving through their harvests in sweet torment.

Forever Deity's glittering Pledge, O Thou
Whose canticle fresh chemistry assigns
To rapt inception and beatitude,—
Always through blinding cables, to our joy,
Of thy white seizure springs the prophecy:
Always through spiring cordage, pyramids
Of silver sequel, Deity's young name
Kinetic of white choiring wings . . . ascends.

Migrations that must needs void memory,
Inventions that cobblestone the heart,—
Unspeakable Thou Bridge to Thee, O Love.
Thy pardon for this history, whitest Flower,
O Answerer of all,—Anemone,—
Now while thy petals spend the suns about us, hold—
(O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me)
Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star
That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings,
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:
—One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,
Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?
Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.

Paraphrase

O F a steady winking beat between
Systole, diastole spokes-of-a-wheel
One rushing from the bed at night
May find the record wedged in his soul.

Above the feet the clever sheets
Lie guard upon the integers of life:
For what skims in between uncurls the toe,
Involves the hands in purposeless repose.

But from its bracket how can the tongue tell
When systematic morn shall sometime flood
The pillow—how desperate is the light
That shall not rouse, how faint the crow's cavil

As, when stunned in that antarctic blaze,
Your head, unrocking to a pulse, already
Hollowed by air, posts a white paraphrase
Among bruised roses on the papered wall.

In Shadow

O UT in the late amber afternoon,
Confused among chrysanthemums,
Her parasol, a pale balloon,
Like a waiting moon, in shadow swims.

Her furtive lace and misty hair
Over the garden dial distill
The sunlight,—then withdrawing, wear
Again the shadows at her will.

Gently yet suddenly, the sheen
Of stars inwraps her parasol.
She hears my step behind the green
Twilight, stiller than shadows, fall.

"Come, it is too late,—too late
To risk alone the light's decline:
Nor has the evening long to wait,"—
But her own words are night's and mine.

Legend

AS silent as a mirror is believed
Realities plunge in silence by . . .

I am not ready for repentance;
Nor to match regrets. For the moth
Bends no more than the still
Imploring flame. And tremorous
In the white falling flakes
Kisses are,—
The only worth all granting.

It is to be learned—
This cleaving and this burning,
But only by the one who
Spends out himself again.

Twice and twice
(Again the smoking souvenir,
Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again.
Until the bright logic is won
Unwhispering as a mirror
Is believed.

Then, drop by caustic drop, a perfect cry
Shall string some constant harmony,—
Relentless caper for all those who step
The legend of their youth into the noon.

Voyages

(VI)

WHERE icy and bright dungeons lift
Of swimmers their lost morning eyes,
And ocean rivers, churning, shift
Green borders under stranger skies,

Steadily as a shell secretes
Its beating leagues of monotone,
Or as many waters trough the sun's
Red kelson past the cape's wet stone;

O rivers mingling toward the sky
And harbor of the phoenix' breast—
My eyes pressed black against the prow,
—Thy derelict and blinded guest

Waiting, afire, what name, unspoke,
I cannot claim: let thy waves rear
More savage than the death of kings,
Some splintered garland for the seer.

Beyond siroccos harvesting
The solstice thunders, crept away,
Like a cliff swinging or a sail
Flung into April's inmost day—

Creation's blithe and petalled word
To the lounged goddess when she rose
Conceding dialogue with eyes
That smile unsearchable repose—

Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,
—Unfolded floating dais before
Which rainbows twine continual hair—
Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!

The imaged Word, it is, that holds
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.
It is the unbetrayable reply
Whose accent no farewell can know.

LEONIE ADAMS

Country Summer

NOW the rich cherry whose sleek wood
And top with silver petals traced,
Like a strict box its gems encased,
Has spilt from out that cunning lid,
All in an innocent green round,
Those melting rubies which it hid;
With moss ripe-strawberry-encrusted,
So birds get half, and minds lapse merry
To taste that deep-red lark's-bite berry,
And blackcap-bloom is yellow-dusted.

The wren that thieved it in the eaves
A trailer of the rose could catch
To her poor droopy sloven thatch,
And side by side with the wren's brood,—
A lovely time of beggars' luck—
Opens the quaint and hairy bud.
And full and golden is the yield
Of cows that never have to house.
But all night nibble under boughs,
Or cool their sides in the moist field.

Into the rooms flow meadow airs,
The warm farm-baking smell blows round;
Inside and out and sky and ground

Are much the same; the wishing star,
Hesperus, kind and early-born,
Is risen only finger-far.
All stars stand close in summer air,
And tremble, and look mild as amber;
When wicks are lighted in the chamber
You might say stars were settling there.

Now straightening from the flowery hay,
Down the still light the mowers look;
Or turn, because their dreaming shook,
And they waked half to other days,
When left alone in yellow-stubble,
The rusty-coated mare would graze.
Yet thick the lazy dreams are born;
Another thought can come to mind,
But like the shivering of the wind,
Morning and evening in the corn.

Sundown

THIS is the time lean woods shall spend
A steeped-up twilight, and the pale evening drink,
And the perilous roe, the leaper to the west brink,
Trembling and bright, to the caverned cloud descend.

Now shall you see pent oak gone gusty and frantic,
Stooped with dry weeping, ruinously unloosing
The sparse disheveled leaf, or reared and tossing
A dreary scarecrow bough in funeral antic.

Aye, tatter you and rend,
Oak heart, to your profession mourning, not obscure
The outcome, not crepuscular, on the deep floor,
Sable and gold match lusters and contend.

And rags of shrouding will not muffle the slain.
This is the immortal extinction, the priceless wound

Not to be staunched; the live gold leaks beyond,
And matter's sanctified, dipped in a gold stain.

OSCAR WILLIAMS

Dwarf of Disintegration

I

WHO is it runs through the many storied mansion of myth
With the exaggerated child's-head among pillars and
palings,
Holding in his grip the balloons of innumerable windows
And chased by the flowing malevolent army of the ceilings?

It is the dwarf, the yellow dwarf, with the minted cheeks,
With the roots of the fingers, with the wafer-thin cry
In a maze of walls, lost in the nurseries of definition,
While shadows dance on shins of trumpets in a waning sky.

Voices are wired in the walls and rats are gnawing rumors,
The throat of music is bursting with the leadpipes of lust,
And the giant's face on the dwarf's shoulders is frightened
As the battle sounds strike the panes from the near-by past.

The pillars in the palace are reclining about like pistons
And the horses of parenthesis have run away into the woods:
The king is caught on the vast flypaper of the people:
There are holes as big as hovels in the wall of platitude.

The queen is ill from planting the garden with progeny
And her eyes are crossed off by vicious marks from her face:
She telephones the dwarf who puts his head in the instrument
To find his features come out in glacial coal bins of space.

The orgasms of distant guns attack at the lustful curtains
And soldiers are standing about in historical knots of lies
Warming the frozen tag-ends of lives around the spontaneous
Combustion of bosses who are stoking hollows of hired eyes.

The swine bulge in the snake bellies of the telegraph wires
And bellow under flat clouds of ceilings in the interior;
Communication swallows the quicksilver swords of distance;
Headlines perform, in squadrons of plumes, on the warriors.

But the draughty palace of fable is full of feeble splendor,
And the yellow dwarf now in possession of knowing documents
Runs after the newspapers cackling on the edge of freedom
While the golden cupboards tremble for the aging sentiments.

The music of battlefields exhilarates the hidden overhead
And injects into the air a breakdown sense of release,
And the numerals wriggle off the lock boxes of the world
Unloosing a swarm of the venomous vultures of the peace.

But the dwarf, the yellow dwarf, with the sunspots for eyes
Is hunting in the archives in the moth holes in the palace,
And he tightens the torture boot around the spinal column,
The steel twilight gleaming with the sweat of his malice.

II

Now that the battle is on, keep off the palace grounds,
You can hear the dwarf rummaging in the elephant inside:
It's better to draw a curtain of birds around your eyes,
Or fall into the picture book under the thumb of a landslide—

Than to come upon spiders eating the iris of the eyeball,
Or glimpse the yellow dwarf digesting the members of princes,
Or see the famous paintings loll, like tongues, from their frames
Into a roomful of heroes pretending to harass pretenses.

The sagging structure is propped between thought and thinker,
The gilded lawns flow on under the smokescreen of the laws:
The allover attack of a decaying body infiltrates to the atom,
Even the beast in the violin hangs out with lopped-off paws.

So run into the first thicket of verbs, the nest of deeds,
Place a skyline between yourself and the grandiose emblem,
For the inquisition wears the hypocritical jowls of a palace,
There's nothing here to salvage, and yours is another problem.

The Leg in the Subway

WHEN I saw the woman's leg on the floor of the subway
train,
Protrude beyond the panel (while her body overflowed my
mind's eye),
When I saw the pink stocking, black shoe, curve bulging with
warmth,
The delicate etching of the hair behind the flesh-colored gauze,
When I saw the ankle of Mrs. Nobody going nowhere for a
nickel,
When I saw this foot motionless on the moving motionless floor,
My mind caught on a nail of a distant star, I was wrenched out
Of the reality of the subway ride, I hung in a socket of distance:
And this is what I saw:

The long tongue of the earth's speed was licking the leg,
Upward and under and around went the long tongue of speed:
It was made of a flesh invisible, it dripped the saliva of miles:
It drank moment, lit shivers of insecurity in niches between
bones:
It was full of eyes, it stopped licking to look at the passengers:
It was as alive as a worm, and busier than anybody in the train:

It spoke saying: To whom does this leg belong? Is it a bonus leg
For the rush hour? Is it a forgotten leg? Among the many
Myriads of legs did an extra leg fall in from the Out There?
O Woman, sliced off bodily by the line of the panel, shall I roll

Your leg into the abdominal nothing, among the digestive teeth?
Or shall I fit it in with the pillars that hold up the headlines?
But nobody spoke, though all the faces were talking silently,
As the train zoomed, a zipper closing up swiftly the seam of
time.

Alas, said the long tongue of the speed of the earth quite faintly,
What is one to do with an incorrigible leg that will not melt—
But everybody stopped to listen to the train vomiting cauldrons
Of silence, while somebody's jolted-out afterthought trickled
down

The blazing shirt-front solid with light bulbs, and just then
The planetary approach of the next station exploded atoms of
light,
And when the train stopped, the leg had grown a surprising
mate,
And the long tongue had slipped hurriedly out through a
window:

I perceived through the hole left by the nail of the star in my
mind
How civilization was as dark as a wood and dimensional with
things
And how birds dipped in chromium sang in the crevices of our
deeds.

Dinner Guest

EVENING, and the slender sugar tongs of a bird's small voice
Pick up the flawless square of our mood from the rim of
thought:

We see the down on the big blond face of the Everywhere,
And the sudden flashing of the carnivorous smile of nature.

We are having dinner with the formal ogre of allness
At the Arts Club among the mirrors and paintings of mirrors:
It is a breakwater moment and against a wall of grinning face
We perceive a radio, the last tooth posted within that mirth.

The cuckoo of light hops out, calling intimate time of the heart
Across the immaculate landscape of the tablecloth and the wine
Of realization, while the hands like gaunt animals are prowling
At the fable's edge, pecking at the crumbs of recrimination.

Dinner time, and the nervous system stretches its starved legs
Into the future, like a driven nail stretching out its length
Into a sea of wood; we are held by a hunger that is good for life;
And Tom Thumb is the guest of the ogre with the gracious
mouth.

The famous paintings around us know how to stay adroitly dead
Giving off the soft lustre of the past and without blinking:
The dinner in the Arts Club flows on, a river of abstraction,
We are miles from the insane beggar who mumbled for a nickel.

Whatever we die of, we shall never die of compassion
In a world lined to the browline with the bins of injustice;
Our fears leaven the bank balance to a frightening sum,
But the genial dinner ransoms the moment fallen among bandits.

We need no death's-head like the Egyptians had at their feasts,
The murdered circumstance stands with wet paws on the marble
Escaped from a movie of the future in the corner arcade;
Dining rooms grow dangerous in an age of guess and garble.

Though we soak our walls in music, patch the eye's blindspots
With murals of morals and dash about in a mess of mass,
We go through a lot of nature with our stupendous digestion
To reach the certainty of one noble sensation at the heart.

Ours is a last supper, without disciples; it is the atom supping
With the boulder, the bead of sweat with the cold great lake,
The eyeball's gloss with a planet on fire, the dot entertained
By encyclopedias of nonsense; man is the guest of the ogre mind.

The Man Coming Toward You

THE man coming toward you is falling forward on all fronts:
He has just come in from the summer hot box of circumstance,

His obedient arm pulls a ticket from the ticket machine,
A bell announces to the long tables his presence on the scene;
The room is crowded with Last Suppers and the air is angry;
The halleluiahs lift listless heads; the man is hungry.

He looks at the people, the rings of lights, the aisles, the chairs,
They mass and attack his eyes and they take him unawares,
But in a moment it is over and the immense hippopotamus cries
And swims away to safety in the vast past of his eyes;
The weeks recoil before the days, the years before the months;
The man is hungry and keeps moving forward on all fronts.

His hair is loosening, his teeth are at bay, he breathes fear,
His nails send futile tendrils into the belly of the atmosphere;
Every drop of his blood is hanging loose in the universe;
His children's faces everywhere bring down the college doors;
He is growing old on all fronts; his foes and his friends
Are bleeding behind invisible walls bedecked with dividends;

His wife is aging, and his skin puts on its anonymous gloves;
The man is helpless, surrounded by two billion hates and loves;
Look at him squirm inside his clothes, the harpies around his
ears,

In just one minute his brother's will have aged four thousand
years.

Who records his stupendous step on the delicate eardrum of
Chance?

The man coming toward you is marching forward on all fronts

The Last Supper

I

APOSTLES of the hidden sun
Are come unto the room of breath
Hung with the banging blinds of death,
The body twelve, the spirit one,
Far as the eye, in earth arrayed,
The night shining, the supper laid.

II

The wine shone on the table that evening of history
Like an enormous ruby in the bauble and mystery.

In the glowing walls of the flickering decanter
There moved His face as at the world's center.

The hands of Judas showed up red and hurried
And the light hit them so, like a cross carried.

The faces of the others were there and moving
In the crystal of the dome, swiftly hovering.

The saints, under a lens, shrunken to pigmies,
Gesticulated in birds or in colored enigmas.

Outside there was a storm, the sound of temblors,
The blood bubbled and sprang into the tumblers.

When the morning came like a white wall of stone,
The day lay in the glass and the blood was gone.

MARYA ZATURENSKA

The White Dress

IMPERCEPTIVELY the world became haunted by her white dress.

Walking in forest or garden, he would start to see,
Her flying form; sudden, swift, brief as a caress
The flash of her white dress against a darkening tree.

And with forced unconcern, withheld desire, and pain
He beheld her at night; and when sleepless in his bed,
Her light footfalls seemed loud as cymbals; deep as his disdain,
Her whiteness entered his heart, flowed through from feet to head.

Or it was her face at a window, her swift knock at the door,
Then she appeared in her white dress, her face as white as her gown;
Like snow in midsummer she came and left the rich day poor;
And the sun chilled and grew higher, remote, and the moon slipped down.

So the years passed; more fierce in pursuit her image grew;
She became the dream abjured, the ill uncured, the deed undone,
The life one never lived, the answer one never knew
Till the white shadow swayed the moon, stayed the expiring sun,

Until at his life's end, the shadow of the white face, the white dress
Became his inmost thought, his private wound, the word unspoken,
All that he cherished in failure, all that had failed his success;
She became the crystal orb, half-seen, untouched, unbroken.

There on his death bed, kneeling at the bed's foot, he trembling
saw,
The image of the Mother-Goddess, enormous, archaic, cruel,
Overpowering the universe, creating her own inexorable law,
Molded of stone, but her fire and ice flooded the room like a pool.

And she was the shadow in the white dress, no longer slight and
flying,
But solid as death. Her cold, firm, downward look,
Brought close to the dissolving mind the marvellous act of dying,
And on her lap, the clasped, closed, iron book.

Lightning for Atmosphere

THE warriors, tigers, flowers of Delacroix
Painted upon the walls ablaze with light
Pure light, cloud blanched, that unstained white,
Queen of the colors, whom all other tints destroy,
Color of the dwindling moon.

Or white lightning, seascapes of Chateaubriand
Shores the dramatic ocean beats upon,
Where the lone hero, gloomy on the wild strand
Sees friends and lovers and companions gone,
Hawk, gull, and heron flying.

White-capped mountains, peaks of dazzling snow
Cloud-pointed Alps, sharp unclimbable heights
Burning effulgence of the northern lights
Toward whose clear radiance, our desire grows,
White heat of the infinite.

The intense young lady seen in a dream long gone
Ringleted, lonely in her villa by the sea
Peers through a misted window, sees the floating swan,
Wild geese whiten the sky, lighten the fir tree
Shrill, sound-shattering solitude.

White-gowned in the thin, nocturnal air
She throws her book aside and her fine ear
Hears flying catches of joy, the ecstatic fear,
Whiteness of the abyss; through her soul's precipice
Dark flows the midnight of her hanging hair.

She through a deep hallucination seeing
Strong waves from sheer, salt oceans, drowned lovers
Pallid and proud. The white blank mind discovers
Figures rising from waterfalls, appearing, fleeing
Into damp creeks, into the steep ravines.

All hearts have their precipices, Alps, white peaks
Moments when the white bird with the deep wound must come
To sing and swoon upon enchanted willows,
The heart disguises its symbols, peers through the hid ravines
Steep-gaping between wars.

HOWARD BAKER

A Letter from the Country

To a Young Editor

IF you are bound to till a soil where farms
Long sown to whirlwinds lavishly crop storms,
Then I suggest your program be
One of informed tenacity.

You'll find the manners of our rural folk
Too mild, where smoking tractors stain the oak,
Where lakebeds heave up to the sun
And deserts with deep rivers run:

A fetid land, for there plain fruits are spurned,
Raised to be gazed at, fingered, and be burned;
Years pass, where almanacs are mad,
Harvestless save to reap a fad.

These things, I mean, are merely outward signs.
For there are inward wolves who trace our vines
And mark, in name of sensuous truth,
Each grape with orgiastic tooth:

Magicians of the senses, necromancers,
And arty exhibitionistic dancers—
These you must steadily defy
Lest they give you their evil eye.

Defiance, bent like a familiar cloak;
Hate, choicest heirloom from your buried folk;
And frugal narrow-mindedness—
Cut from these cloths your usual dress.

Be much hedged in. Rehearse the ancient ways
Till to your strong windbreak on wholesome days,
Timid, to fright still uninured,
Comes Amaryllis, reassured;

Comes softly, briar-scratched, with tangled hair,
Leading those others who wait and shyly stare—
Masters who fled the savage wave,
Returned unkempt from their high cave.

Then lean your head to their slow syllables:
Whispering deep seas beneath the fleeting gulls:
The torch of Hecuba, the birth,
Ruined Ilium fading into earth:

Of sin, and change, which never changes sin,
Speak these, the seashells; their voice is the thin
Threaded impalpable high cry,
The constant in humanity.

Pity alone one who in learned tone
Drops wistful notes on youths and seasons flown;
The rest, come back from Death's black lands,
Once held Death off with naked hands.

Visitors from impending quiet, they!
They patiently await a better day.
Meanwhile a tale, though poor of laurel,
Is worth retelling for its moral.

Hold to your cottage, yet be swift to sting
The pedlar who displays a ciphered ring
And nostrums made of standard parts,
Who lisps of shortcuts to the arts;

Lest unobserved he spell his runic schemes,
Rest in a bed of cold ill-natured dreams;
Leave with your napkin your cheer at table.
That is the lesson; this the fable:

A bee who made a pasture her domain
Taught cows that it was healthful to abstain
Till she herself was through with clover;
And many picnics chased to cover.

She reigned a vixen till one day, too kind,
She let a cow, low bowing, come behind,
Catch up and wrap her in its tongue.
Mussed and enraged, she would have stung,

Except that vengeance seemed a richer feast
If taken in the inwards of the beast.
So down a warm canal she moved—
Lethe for her, it almost proved.

She slept; dreamt regal dreams of one cow's fate;
Awoke with verdict sealed, but rather late;
With stinger poised, the sheath withdrawn,
She noticed that the cow was gone.

ROBERT PENN WARREN

End of Season

LEAVE now the beach, and even that perfect friendship
—Hair frosting, careful teeth—that came, oh! late,
Late, late, almost too late: that thought like a landslip;
Or only the swimmer's shape for which you would wait,
Bemused and pure among the bright umbrellas, while
Blue mountains breathed and the dark boys cried their bird-
throated syllable.

Leave beach, *spiagga, playa, plage, or spa,*
Where beginnings are always easy; or leave, even,
The Springs where your grandpa went in Arkansas
To purge the rheumatic guilt of beef and bourbon,
And slept like a child, nor called out with the accustomed night-
mare,
But lolled his old hams, stained hands, in that Lethe, as others,
others, before.

For waters wash our guilt and dance in the sun:
And the prophet, hairy and grim in the leonine landscape,
Came down to Jordan; toward moon-set de Leon
Woke, while squat Time clucked like the darkling ape;
And Dante's *duca*, smiling in the blessed clime,
With rushes, sea-wet, wiped from that sad brow the infernal
grime.

You'll come, you'll come! and with the tongue gone wintry
You'll greet in town the essential face, which now wears
The mask of travel, smudge of history;
And wordless, each one clasps, and stammering, stares:
You will have to learn a new language to say what is to say,
But it will never be useful in schoolroom, customs, or café.

For purity was wordless, and perfection
But the bridegroom's sleep or the athlete's marble dream,
And the annual sacrament of sea and sun,
Which browns the face and heals the heart, will seem
Silence, expectant to the answer, which is Time:
For all our conversation is index to our common crime.

On the last day swim far out, should the doctor permit
—Crawl, trudgeon, breast—or deep and wide-eyed, dive
Down the glaucous glimmer where no voice can visit;
But the mail lurks in the box at the house where you live:
Summer's wishes, winter's wisdom—you must think
On the true nature of Hope, whose eye is round and does not
wink.

Revelation

BECAUSE he had spoken harshly to his mother,
The day became astonishingly bright,
The enormity of distance crept to him like a dog now,
And earth's own luminescence seemed to repel the night.

Roof was rent like the loud paper tearing to admit
Sun-sulphurous splendor where had been before
But the submarine glimmer by kindly countenances lit,
As slow, phosphorescent dignities light the ocean floor.

By walls, by walks, chrysanthemum and aster,
All hairy, fat-petalled species, lean, confer,
And his ears, and heart, should burn at that insidious whisper
Which concerns him so, he knows; but he cannot make out the
words.

The peacock screamed, and his feathered fury made
Legend shake, all day, while the sky ran pale as milk;
That night, all night, the buck rabbit stamped in the moonlit
glade,

And the owl's brain glowed like a coal in the grove's combustible dark.

When Sulla smote and Rome was rent, Augustine
Recalled how Nature, shuddering, tore her gown,
And kind changed kind, and the blunt herbivorous tooth dripped
blood;
At Duncan's death, at Dunsinane, chimneys blew down.

But, oh! his mother was kinder than ever Rome,
Dearer than Duncan—no wonder, then, Nature's frame
Thrilled in voluptuous hemispheres far off from his home;
But not in terror: only as the bride, as the bride.

In separateness only does love learn definition,
Though Brahma smiles beneath the dappled shade,
Though tears, that night, wet the pillow where the boy's head
was laid
Dreamless of splendid antipodal agitation;

And though across what tide and tooth Time is,
He was to lean back toward that recalcitrant face,
He would think, than Sulla more fortunate, how once he had
learned
Something important about love, and about love's grace.

Pursuit

THE hunchback on the corner, with gum and shoelaces,
Has his own wisdom and pleasures, and may not be lured
To divulge them to you, for he has merely endured
Your appeal for his sympathy and your kind purchases;
And wears infirmity but as the general who turns
Apart, in his famous old greatcoat there on the hill
At dusk when the rapture and cannonade are still,
To muse withdrawn from the dead, from his gorgeous sub
alterns;

Or stares from the thicket of his familiar pain, like a fawn
That meets you a moment, wheels, in imperious innocence is
gone.

Go to the clinic. Wait in the outer room,
Where like an old possum the snag-nailed hand will hump
On its knee in murderous patience, and the pomp
Of pain swells like the Indies, or a plum.
And there you will stand, as on the Roman hill,
Stunned by each withdrawn gaze and severe shape,
The first barbarian victor stood to gape
At the sacrificial fathers, white-robed, still;
And even the feverish old Jew regards you with authority
Till you feel like one who has come too late, or improperly
clothed, to a party.

The doctor will take you row. He is burly and clean;
Listening, like lover or worshiper, bends at your heart;
But cannot make out just what it tries to impart;
So smiles; says you simply need a change of scene.
Of scene, of solace: therefore Florida,
Where Ponce de Leon clanked among the lilies,
Where white sails skit on blue and cavort like fillies,
And the shoulder gleams in the moonlit corridor.
A change of love: if love is a groping Godward, though blind,
No matter what crevice, cranny, chink, bright in dark, the pale
tentacle find.

In Florida consider the flamingo,
Its color passion but its neck a question;
Consider even that girl the other guests shun
On beach, at bar, in bed, for she may know
The secret you are seeking, after all;
Or the child you humbly sit by, excited and curly,
That screams on the shore at the sea's sunlit hurlyburly,
Till the mother calls its name, toward nightfall.
Till you sit alone: in the dire meridians, off Ireland, in fury
Of spume-tooth and dawnless sea-heave, salt rimes the lookout's
devout eye.

Till you sit alone—which is the beginning of error—
Behind you the music and lights of the great hotel:
Solution, perhaps, is public, despair personal,
But history held to your breath clouds like a mirror.
There are many states, and towns in them, and faces,
But meanwhile, the little old lady in black, by the wall,
Who admires all the dancers, and tells you how just last fall
Her husband died in Ohio, and damp mists her glasses;
She blinks and croaks, like a toad or a Norn, in the horrible
light,
And rattles her crutch, which may put forth a small bloom, per-
haps white.

KENNETH PATCHEN

*The Character of Love Seen as a Search
for the Lost*

YOU, the woman; I, the man; this, the world:
And each is the work of all.

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Many beautiful arms about us and the things we know.

See how those stars tramp over heaven on their sticks
Of ancient light: with what simplicity that blue
Takes eternity into the quiet cave of God, where Caesar
And Socrates, like primitive paintings on a wall,
Look, with idiot eyes, on the world where we two are.

You, the sought for; I, the seeker; this, the search:
And each is the mission of all.

For greatness is only the drayhorse that coaxes
The built cart out; and where we go is reason.
But genius is an enormous littleness, a trickling
Of heart that covers alike the hare and the hunter.

How smoothly, like the sleep of a flower, love,
The grassy wind moves over night's tense meadow:
See how the great wooden eyes of the forest
Stare upon the architecture of our innocence.

You, the village; I, the stranger; this, the road:
And each is the work of all.

Then, not that man do more, or stop pity; but that he be
Wider in living; that all his cities fly a clean flag . . .
We have been alone too long, love; it is terribly late
For the pierced feet on the water and we must not die now.

Have you wondered why all the windows in heaven were broken?
Have you seen the homeless in the open grave of God's hand?
Do you want to acquaint the larks with the fatuous music of war?

There is the muffled step in the snow; the stranger;
The crippled wren; the nun; the dancer; the Jesus-wing
Over the walkers in the village; and there are
Many desperate arms about us and the things we know.

Fog

RAIN'S lovely gray daughter has lost her tall lover.
He whose mouth she knew; who was good to her.

I've heard her talk of him when the river lights
Scream 'Christ! it's lonely; Christ! it's cold.'

Heard the slug cry of her loneliness calling him
When the ship's mast points to no star in the North.

Many men have thought they were he;
Feeling her cold arms as they held death in theirs—

The woman-face in the frame of nothingness;
As the machinery of sleep turned its first wheel;

And they slept, while angels fell in colored sound
Upon the closing waters. Child and singing cradle one.

O sorrowful lady whose lover is that harbor
In a heaven where all we of longing lie, clinging together as it
gets dark.

At the New Year

IN the shape of this night, in the still fall of snow, Father
In all that is cold and tiny, these little birds and children
In everything that moves tonight, the trolleys and the lovers,
Father
In the great hush of country, in the ugly noise of our cities
In this deep throw of stars, in those trenches where the dead are,
Father
In all the wide land waiting, and in the liners out on the black
water
In all that has been said bravely, in all that is mean anywhere in
the world, Father
In all that is good and lovely, in every house where sham and
hatred are
In the name of those who wait, in the sound of angry voices,
Father
Before the bells ring, before this little point in time has rushed
us on
Before this clean moment has gone, before this night turns to
face tomorrow, Father
There is this high singing in the air
Forever this sorrowful human face in eternity's window
And there are other bells that we would ring, Father
Other bells that we would ring.

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave

IN the naked bed, in Plato's cave,
Reflected headlights slowly slid the wall,
Carpenters hammered under the shaded window,
Wind troubled the window curtains all night long,
A fleet of trucks strained uphill, grinding,
Their freights covered, as usual.
The ceiling lightened again, the slanting diagram
Slid slowly forth.

Hearing the milkman's chop,
His striving up the stair, the bottle's chink,
I rose from bed, lit a cigarette,
And walked to the window. The stony street
Displayed the stillness in which buildings stand,
The street-lamp's vigil and the horse's patience.
The winter sky's pure capital
Turned me back to bed with exhausted eyes.

Strangeness grew in the motionless air. The loose
Film grayed. Shaking wagons, hooves' waterfalls,
Sounded far off, increasing, louder and nearer.
A car coughed, starting. Morning, softly
Melting the air, lifted the half-covered chair
From underseas, kindled the looking-glass,
Distinguished the dresser and the white wall.
The bird called tentatively, whistled, called,
Bubbled and whistled, so! Perplexed, still wet
With sleep, affectionate, hungry and cold. So, so,
O son of man, the ignorant night, the travail
Of early morning, the mystery of beginning
Again and again,

while History is unforgiven.

At This Moment of Time

SOME who are uncertain compel me. They fear
The Ace of Spades. They fear
Love offered suddenly, turning from the mantelpiece,
Sweet with decision. And they distrust
The fireworks by the lakeside, first the spuft,
Then the colored lights, rising.
Tentative, hesitant, doubtful, they consume
Greedily Caesar at the prow returning,
Locked in the stone of his act and office.
While the brass band brightly bursts over the water
They stand in the crowd lining the shore
Aware of the water beneath Him. They know it. Their eyes
Are haunted by water.

Disturb me, compel me. It is not true
That "no man is happy," but that is not
The sense which guides you. If we are
Unfinished (we are, unless hope is a bad dream),
You are exact. You tug my sleeve
Before I speak, with a shadow's friendship,
And I remember that we who move
Are moved by clouds that darken midnight.

Socrates' Ghost Must Haunt Me Now

SOCRATES' ghost must haunt me now,
Notorious death has let him go,
He comes to me with a clumsy bow,
Saying in his disused voice,
That I do not know I do not know,
The mechanical whims of appetite
Are all that I have of conscious choice,
The butterfly caged in electric light
Is my only day in the world's great night,

Love is not love, it is a child
 Sucking his thumb and biting his lip,
 But grasp it all, there may be more!
 From the topless sky to the bottomless floor
 With the heavy head and the finger tip:
 All is not blind, obscene, and poor.
 Socrates stands by me stockstill,
 Teaching hope to my flickering will,
 Pointing to the sky's inexorable blue
 —Old Noumenon, come true, come true!

"Mentrechè il Vento, Come Fa, Si Tace"

WILL you perhaps consent to be
 Now that a little while is still
 (Ruth of sweet wind) now that a little while
 My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind
 Touches this single of your flowers, this one only,
 Will you perhaps consent to be
 My many-branchéd, small and dearest tree?

My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind
 —The wind which is wild and restless, tired and asleep,
 The wind which is tired, wild and still continuing,
 The wind which is chill, and warm, wet, soft, in every influence,
 Lusts for Paris, Crete and Pergamus,
 Is suddenly off for Paris and Chicago,
 Judaea, San Francisco, the Midi,
 —May I perhaps return to you
 Wet with an Attic dust and chill from Norway
 My dear, so-many-branchéd smallest tree?

Would you perhaps consent to be
 The very rack and crucifix of winter, winter's wild
 Knife-edged, continuing and unreleasing,
 Intent and stripping, ice-caressing wind?
 My dear, most dear, so-many-branchéd smallest tree
 My mind's continuing and unreleasing wind

Touches this single of your flowers, faith in me,
Wide as the—sky!—accepting as the (air)!
—Consent, consent, consent to be
My many-branchéd, small and dearest tree.

RICHARD EBERHART

The Largess

WITH Cicada's nymphal skin
So have I meetings made,
Let down my eyes to him,
With fear upon that thin shade.

Lest the look I gave
Was death's loving me,
To every memory have,
That himself he see.

Yet O marvellous crispness,
Dun, but perfect structure,
Thin as matter is,
It has its wondrous lure.

And took it in my grassy feel,
That cold, that final form,
If still it be the same;
Alert to a hoped harm.

Where have you gone, slight being
Whose brown monument
Mirror makes of wings
Yet in a damp tenement.

Can I among winds lose you
When vibrant is all air?
Must I not use you
Then in every desire?

Do treble drums a changing
Ecstasy keep fresh;
Insistent, sing to me,
Over fields of August.

It has not denied my mind,
But no sign has made,
Bleak, delicate, defined
And crinkled husk once life had.

My eyes soothe over him,
My hand trembles with force.
What eternal hovers in
Him: speak, are you corpse?

Experience Evoked

NOW come to me all men
With savagery and innocence,
With axe to chop the fir tree,
Or seed, small, for the immense
Sewing of earth with old Rose.
Now come all men, arrayed
With the colours of the garden
Around them where they stayed
Till bone began to harden
Under the thinning of the nose.
Come all men, unto whom
Wind was a snarling wire whip
In the contusions of a doom
And with red flecks on their lip
They leaped up, danced, grew tall.
Come all, the babe bound

In terror and panic cry;
Or an old man found
With a skylark in his eye.
Come, harsh shroud over all.

The Groundhog

IN June, amid the golden fields,
I saw a groundhog lying dead.
Dead lay he; my senses shook,
And mind outshot our naked frailty.
There lowly in the vigorous summer
His form began its senseless change,
And made my senses waver dim
Seeing nature ferocious in him.
Inspecting close his maggots' might
And seething cauldron of his being,
Half with loathing, half with a strange love,
I poked him with an angry stick.
The fever arose, became a flame
And Vigour circumscribed the skies,
Immense energy in the sun,
And through my frame a sunless trembling.
My stick had done nor good nor harm.
Then stood I silent in the day
Watching the object, as before;
And kept my reverence for knowledge
Trying for control, to be still,
To quell the passion of the blood;
Until I had bent down on my knees
Praying for joy in the sight of decay.
And so I left; and I returned
In Autumn strict of eye, to see
The sap gone out of the groundhog,
But the bony sodden hulk remained.
But the year had lost its meaning,

And in intellectual chains
 I lost both love and loathing,
 Mured up in the wall of wisdom.
 Another summer took the fields again
 Massive and burning, full of life,
 But when I chanced upon the spot
 There was only a little hair left,
 And bones bleaching in the sunlight
 Beautiful as architecture;
 I watched them like a geometer,
 And cut a walking stick from a birch.
 It has been three years, now.
 There is no sign of the groundhog.
 I stood there in the whirling summer,
 My hand capped a withered heart,
 And thought of China and of Greece,
 Of Alexander in his tent;
 Of Montaigne in his tower,
 Of Saint Theresa in her wild lament.

1934

CAUGHT upon a thousand thorns, I sing,
 Like a rag in the wind,
 Caught in the blares of the automobile horns
 And on the falling airplane's wing.
 Caught napping in my study
 Among a thousand books of poetry.

Doing the same thing over and over again
 Brings about an obliteration of pain.
 Each day dies in a paper litter
 As the heart becomes less like a rapier.
 In complexity, feeling myself absurd
 Dictating an arbitrary word,

My self my own worst enemy,
 Hunting the past through all its fears,

That on the brain that glory burst
Bombing a ragged future's story,
Caught in iron individuality
As in the backwash of a sea

Knowing not whether to fight out,
Or keep silent; to talk about the weather,
Or rage again through wrong and right,
Knowing knowledge is a norm of nothing,
And I have been to the Eastern seas
And walked on all the Hebrides.

Ashamed of loving a long-practised selfhood,
Lost in a luxury of speculation,
At the straight grain of a pipe I stare
And spit upon all worlds of Spain;
Time like a certain sedative
Quelling the growth of the purpose tree.

Aware of the futility of action,
Of the futility of prayer aware,
Trying to pry from the vest of poetry
The golden heart of mankind's deep despair,
Unworthy of a simple love
In august, elected worlds to move

Stern, pliant in the modern world, I sing,
Afraid of nothing and afraid of everything,
Curtailing joy, withholding irony,
Pleased to condemn contemporaneity
Seeking the reality, skirting
The dangerous absolutes of fear and hope,

And I have eased reality and fiction
Into a kind of intellectual fruition
Strength in solitude, life in death,
Compassion by suffering, love in strife,
And ever and still the weight of mystery
Arrows a way between my words and me.

MURIEL RUKEYSER

Ajanta

NOTE: In India, between the second century B.C. and the sixth century A.D., a school of Buddhist painter-monks worked on the walls of the Ajanta caves, keeping a tradition in painting that was lost in the East after them and never known in the West. Based on the religious analogy between the space of the body and the space of the universe, the treatment of bodies in these scenes of the life of the gods is such that the deepest background is the wall on which the paintings are done—the figures in the round but shadowless, start forward, seeming to fill the cave. Reality is fully accepted, then, the function of such an art is to fill with creation an accepted real world.

CAME in my full youth to the midnight cave
 nerves ringing; and this thing I did alone.
 Wanting my fulness and not a field of war,
 for the world considered annihilation, a star
 called Wormwood rose and flickered, shattering
 bent light over the dead boiling up in the ground,
 the biting yellow of their corrupted lives
 streaming to war, denying all our words.
 Nothing was left among the tainted weather
 but world-walking and the shadowless Ajanta.
 Hallucination and the metal laugh
 in clouds, and the mountain-spectre riding storm.
 Nothing was certain but a moment of peace,
 a hollow behind the unbreakable waterfall.
 All the way to the cave, the teeming forms of death,
 and death, the price of the body, cheap as air.
 I blessed my heart on the expiation journey
 for it had never been unable to suffer:
 when I met the man whose face looked like the future,
 when I met the whore with the dying red hair,
 the child myself who is my murderer.
 So came I between heaven and my grave

past the serene smile of the *voyeur*, to
this cave where the myth enters the heart again.

II. THE CAVE

Space to the mind, the painted cave of dream.
This is not a womb, nothing but good emerges:
this is a stage, neither unreal nor real
where the walls are the world, the rocks and palaces
stand on a borderland of blossoming ground.
If you stretch your hand, you touch the slope of the world
reaching in interlaced gods, animals, and men.
There is no background. The figures hold their peace
in a web of movement. There is no frustration,
every gesture is taken, everything yields connections.
The heavy sensual shoulders, the thighs, the blood-born flesh
and earth turning into color, rocks into their crystals,
water to sound, fire to form; life flickers
uncounted into the supple arms of love.
The space of these walls is the body's living space;
tear open your ribs and breathe the color of time
where nothing leads away, the world comes forward
in flaming sequences. Pillars and prisms. Riders
and horses and the figures of consciousness,
red cow grows long, goes running through the world.
Flung into movement in carnal purity,
these bodies are sealed—warm lip and crystal hand
in a jungle of light. Color-sheeted, seductive
foreboding eyelid lowered on the long eye,
fluid and vulnerable. The spaces of the body
are suddenly limitless, and riding flesh
shapes constellations over the golden breast,
confusion of scents and illuminated touch—
monster touch, the throat printed with brightness,
wide outlined gesture where the bodies ride.
Bells, and the spirit flashing. The religious bells,
bronze under the sunlight like breasts ringing,
bronze in the closed air, the memory of walls,
great sensual shoulders in the web of time.

III. LES TENDRESSES BESTIALES

A procession of caresses alters the ancient sky
until new constellations are the body shining:
There's the Hand to steer by, there the horizon Breast,
and the Great Stars kindling the fluid hill.
All the rooms open into magical boxes,
nothing is tilted, everything flickers
sexual and exquisite.
The panther with its throat along my arm
turns black and flows away.
Deep in all streets passes a faceless whore
and the checkered men are whispering one word.
The face I know becomes the night-black rose.
The sharp face is now an electric fan
and says one word to me.
The dice and the alcohol and the destruction
have drunk themselves and cast.
Broken bottle of loss, and the glass
turned bloody into the face.
Now the scene comes forward, very clear.
Dream-singing, airborne, surrenders the recalled,
the gesture arrives riding over the breast,
singing, singing, tender atrocity,
the silver derelict wearing fur and claws.
Oh love, I stood under the apple branch,
I saw the whipped bay and the small dark islands,
and night sailing the river and the foghorn's word.
My life said to you: I want to love you well.
The wheel goes back and I shall live again,
but the wave turns, my birth arrives and spills
over my breast the world bearing my grave,
and your eyes open in earth. You touched my life.
My life reaches the skin, moves under your smile,
and your shoulders and your throat and your face and your
thighs
flash.
I am haunted by interrupted acts,

introspective as a leper, enchanted
by a repulsive clew,
a gross and fugitive movement of the limbs.
Is this the love that shook the lights to flame?
Sheeted avenues thrash in the wind,
torn streets, the savage parks.
I am plunged deep. Must find the midnight cave.

IV. BLACK BLOOD

A habit leading to murder, smoky laughter
hated at first, but necessary later.
Alteration of motives. To stamp in terror
around the deserted harbor, down the hill
until the woman laced into a harp
screams and screams and the great clock strikes,
swinging its giant figures past the face.
The Floating Man rides on the ragged sunset
asking and asking. Do not say, Which loved?
Which was beloved? Only, Who most enjoyed?
Armored ghost of rage, screaming and powerless.
Only find me and touch my blood again.
Find me. A girl runs down the street
singing Take me, yelling Take me Take
Hang me from the clapper of a bell
and you as hangman ring it sweet tonight,
for nothing clean in me is more than cloud
unless you call it.—As I ran I heard
a black voice beating among all that blood:
“Try to live as if there were a God.”

V. THE BROKEN WORLD

Came to Ajanta cave, the painted space of the breast,
the real world where everything is complete,
there are no shadows, the forms of incompleteness.
The great cloak blows in the light, rider and horse arrive,
the shoulders turn and every gift is made.

No shadows fall. There is no source of distortion.
In our world, a tree casts the shadow of a woman,
a man the shadow of a phallus, a hand raised
the shadow of the whip.
Here everything is itself,
here all may stand
on summer earth.
Brightness has overtaken every light,
and every myth netted itself in flesh.
New origins, and peace given entire
and the spirit alive.
In the shadowless cave
the naked arm is raised.
Animals arrive,
interlaced, and gods
interlaced, and men
flame-woven.
I stand and am complete.

Crawls from the door,
black at my two feet
the shadow of the world.
World, not yet one,
enters the heart again.
The naked world, and the old noise of tears,
the fear, the expiation and the love,
a world of the shadowed and alone.
The journey, and the struggles of the moon.

Boy with His Hair Cut Short

SUNDAY shuts down on this twentieth-century evening.
The L passes. Twilight and bulb define
the brown room, the overstuffed plum sofa,
the boy, and the girl's thin hands above his head.
A neighbor radio sings stocks, news, serenade.

He sits at the table, head down, the young clear neck exposed,
watching the drugstore sign from the tail of his eye;
tattoo, neon, until the eye blears, while his
solicitous tall sister, simple in blue, bending
behind him, cuts his hair with her cheap shears.

The arrow's electric red always reaches its mark,
successful neon! He coughs, impressed by that precision.
His child's forehead, forever protected by his cap,
is bleached against the lamplight as he turns head
and steadies to let the snippets drop.

Erasing the failure of weeks with level fingers,
she sleeks the fine hair, combing: "You'll look fine tomorrow!
You'll surely find something, they can't keep turning you down;
the finest gentleman's not so trim as you!" Smiling, he raises
the adolescent forehead wrinkling ironic now.

He sees his decent suit laid out, new-pressed,
his carfare on the shelf. He lets his head fall, meeting
her earnest hopeless look, seeing the sharp blades splitting,
the darkened room, the impersonal sign, her motion,
the blue vein, bright on her temple, pitifully beating.

KARL JAY SHAPIRO

Nostalgia

MY soul stands at the window of my room,
And I ten thousand miles away;
My days are filled with Ocean's sound of doom,
Salt and cloud and the bitter spray.
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My selfish youth, my books with gilded edge,
Knowledge and all gaze down the street;
The potted plants upon the window ledge
Gaze down with selfish lives and sweet.
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

My night is now her day, my day her night,
So I lie down, and so I rise;
The sun burns close, the star is losing height,
The clock is hunted down the skies.
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Truly a pin can make the memory bleed,
A world explode the inward mind
And turn the skulls and flowers never freed
Into the air, no longer blind.
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

Laughter and grief join hands. Always the heart
Clumps in the breast with heavy stride;
The face grows lined and wrinkled like a chart,
The eyes bloodshot with tears and tide.
Let the wind blow, for many a man shall die.

The Fly

O HIDEOUS little bat, the size of snot,
With polyhedral eye and shabby clothes,
To populate the stinking cat you walk
The promontory of the dead man's nose,
Climb with the fine leg of a Duncan-Phyfe
The smoking mountains of my food
And in a comic mood
In mid-air take to bed a wife.

Riding and riding with your filth of hair
On gluey foot or wing, forever coy,

Hot from the compost and green sweet decay,
Sounding your buzzer like an urchin toy—
You dot all whiteness with diminutive stool,
 In the tight belly of the dead
 Burrow with hungry head
And inlay maggots like a jewel.

At your approach the great horse stomps and paws
Bringing the hurricane of his heavy tail;
Shod in disease you dare to kiss my hand
Which sweeps against you like an angry flail;
Still you return, return, trusting your wing
 To draw you from the hunter's reach
 That learns to kill to teach
Disorder to the tinier thing.

My peace is your disaster. For your death
Children like spiders cup their pretty hands
And wives resort to chemistry of war.
In fens of sticky paper and quicksands
You glue yourself to death. Where you are stuck
 You struggle hideously and beg
 You amputate your leg
Imbedded in the amber muck.

But I, a man, must swat you with my hate,
Slap you across the air and crush your flight,
Must mangle with my shoe and smear your blood, .
Expose your little guts pasty and white,
Knock your head sideways like a drunkard's hat,
 Pin your wings under like a crow's,
 Tear off your flimsy clothes
And beat you as one beats a rat.

Then like Gargantua I stride among
The corpses strewn like raisins in the dust,
The broken bodies of the narrow dead
That catch the throat with fingers of disgust
I sweep. One gyrates like a top and falls

And stunned, stone blind, and deaf
 Buzzes its frightful F
And dies between three cannibals.

Epitaph for John and Richard

THERE goes the clock; there goes the sun;
Greenwich is right with Arlington;
The signal's minutes are signifying
That somebody old has finished dying,
That somebody young has just begun.

What do you think you earned today
Except the waste, except the pay,
Except the power to be spending?
And now your year is striking, ending,
What do you think you have put away?

Only a promise, only a life
Squandered in secret with a wife
In bedtime feigning and unfeigning;
The blood has long since ceased complaining;
The clock has satisfied the strife.

They will not cast your honored head
Or say from lecterns what you said,
But only keep you with them all
Committed in the City Hall;
Once born, once married, and once dead.

Travelogue for Exiles

LOOK and remember. Look upon this sky;
Look deep and deep into the sea-clean air,
The unconfined, the terminus of prayer.
Speak now and speak into the hallowed dome.

What do you hear? What does the sky reply?
The heavens are taken: this is not your home.

Look and remember. Look upon this sea;
 Look down and down into the tireless tide.
 What of a life below, a life inside,
 A tomb, a cradle in the curly foam?
 The waves arise; sea-wind and sea agree
The waters are taken: this is not your home.

Look and remember. Look upon this land,
 Far, far across the factories and the grass.
 Surely, there, surely, they will let you pass.
 Speak then and ask the forest and the loam.
 What do you hear? What does the land command?
The earth is taken: this is not your home.

The Twins

LIKENESS has made them animal and shy.
 See how they turn their full gaze left and right.
 Seeking the other, yet not moving close;
 Nothing in their relationship is gross,
 But soft, conspicuous, like giraffes. And why
 Do they not speak except by sudden sight?
 Sisters kiss freely and unsubtle friends
 Wrestle like lovers; brothers loudly laugh:
 These in a dreamier bondage dare not touch.
 Each is the other's soul and hears too much
 The heartbeat of the other; each apprehends
 The sad duality and the imperfect half.

The one lay sick, the other wandered free,
 But like a child to a small plot confined
 Walked a short way and dumbly reappeared.
 Is it not all-in-all of what they feared,
 The single death, the obvious destiny
 That maims the miracle their will designed?

For they go emptily from face to face,
 Keeping the instinctive partnership of birth
 A ponderous marriage and a sacred name;
 Theirs is the pride of shouldering each the same
 The old indignity of Esau's race
 And Dromio's denouement of tragic mirth.

Poet

Il arrive que l'esprit demande la poésie

LEFT leg flung out, head cocked to the right,
 Tweed coat or army uniform, with book,
 Beautiful eyes, who is this walking down?
 Who, glancing at the pane of glass looks sharp
 And thinks it is not he—as when a poet
 Comes swiftly on some half-forgotten poem
 And loosely holds the page, steady of mind,
 Thinking it is not his?

And when will *you* exist?—Oh, it is I,
 Incredibly skinny, stooped, and neat as pie,
 Ignorant as dirt, erotic as an ape,
 Dreamy as puberty—with dirty hair!
 Into the room like kangaroo he bounds,
 Ears flopping like the most expensive hound's;
 His chin received all questions as he bows
 Mouthing a green bon-bon.

Has no more memory than rubber. Stands
 Waist-deep in heavy mud of thought and broods
 At his own wetness. When he would get out,
 To his surprise he lifts in air a phrase
 As whole and clean and silvery as a fish.
 Which jumps and dangles on his damned hooked grin,
 But like a name-card on a man's lapel
 Calls him a conscious fool.

And childlike he remembers all his life
And cannily constructs it, fact by fact,
As boys paste postage stamps in careful books,
Denoting pence and legends and profiles,
Nothing more valuable.—And like a thief,
His eyes glassed over and concealed with guilt,
Fondles his secrets like a case of tools,
And waits in empty doors.

By men despised for knowing what he is,
And by himself. But he exists for women.
As dolls to girls, as perfect wives to men,
So he to women. And to himself a thing,
All ages, epicene, without a trade.
To girls and wives always alive and fated;
To men and scholars always dead like Greek
And always mistranslated.

Towards exile and towards shame he lures himself,
Tongue winding on his arm, and thinks like Eve
By biting apple will become most wise.
Sentio ergo sum: he feels his way
And words themselves stand up for him like Braille.
And punch and perforate his parchment ear.
All language falls like Chinese on his soul,
Image of song unsounded.

This is the coward's coward that in his dreams
Sees shapes of pain grow tall. Awake at night
He peers at sounds and stumbles at a breeze.
And none holds life less dear. For as a youth
Who by some accident observes his love
Naked and in some natural ugly act,
He turns with loathing and with flaming hands,
Seared and betrayed by sight.

He is the business man, on beauty trades,
Dealer in arts and thoughts who, like the Jew,

Shall rise from slums and hated dialects
A tower of bitterness. Shall be always strange,
Hunted and then sought after. Shall be sat
Like an ambassador from another race
At tables rich with music. He shall eat flowers,
Chew honey and spit out gall. They shall all smile
And love and pity him.

His death shall be by drowning. In that hour
When the last bubble of pure heaven's air
Hovers within his throat, safe on his bed,
A small eternal figurehead in terror,
He shall cry out and clutch his days of straw
Before the blackest wave. Lastly, his tomb
Shall list and founder in the troughs of grass.
And none shall speak his name.

Waitress

WHOEVER with the compasses of his eyes
Is plotting the voyage of your steady shape
As you come laden through the room and back
And rounding your even bottom like a Cape
Crooks his first finger, whistles through his lip
Till you arrive, all motion, like a ship,

He is my friend—consider his dark pangs
And love of Niger, naked indigence,
Dance him the menu of a poem and squirm
Deep in the juke-box jungle, green and dense.
Surely he files his teeth, punctures his nose,
Carves out the god and takes off all his clothes.

For once, the token on the table's edge
Sufficing, proudly and with hair unpinned
You mounted the blueplate, stretched out and grinned
Like Christmas fish and turkey nink and skinned.

Eyes on the half-shell, loin with parsley stuck,
Thigh bones and ribs and little toes to suck.

I speak to you, ports of the northern myth,
This dame is carved and eaten. One by one
God knows what hour, her different parts go home,
Lastly her pants and day or night is done;
But on the restaurant the sign of fear
Reddens and blazes—"English spoken here."

JOHN MALCOLM BRINNIN

The Late Summer

TO say, Change Cometh, set the old scene straight,
Mark off long summer in a frame of kites,
Pegging the four blue corners of the wind;
So turns my purpose backward, chilled with leaves.

Like voyagers who, slow to lose the weave
Of seas beneath them, waver on the shore,
So am I beached upon this running strand
While underwater all Manhattan tolls.

Now shall I range the sands hysterical,
And speak with parables to the swift sun?
My hands are curious, when driftwood comes,
Testing a branch, or tracing lettering.

If, in the manner of the books, some sail
Comes riding over all that scattered loss,
May I rejoice for piracy and thieves,
Beat on a drum, scrimmage for preference?

Go down, my summertime, with every kite
That, like a roving anchor, drags my heart;
Come, summer like a masterpiece, come sky,
Demand to be remembered, framed and false.

A Letter

A DAY was nothing until this; words went
Like horns through traffic, like the instant birds;
A day was dormant, yet-to-be-danced among
The sudden neon furniture and books.

It was that intricate familiar thing
When, coughing like the French ambassador,
The postman said his phrase about the rain
And went undeviating through the door.

O, if I wanted legacies, a poem,
An invitation to the dance, or hoped
For declarations of a stranger's love,
My fingers burst like matches on your name.

If it is later now, if the rain has stopped,
If no one dressed in seaweed lurches in
Like some surprised Ophelia with green hands,
I covet reason but for truth like this:

There is communication on the earth
As quiet as the opening of a wing;
There is a wine of choice, and we who drink
Touch all our future to that emphasis.

The Marginal Dark

RAIN, like a traveler, walks on the night.
Skyscrapers make their cubist gestures where

The reach of man outruns his mortal height;
The intermittent multitudes are here,
Grouped by the rain in doorways, stopped in flight
Between commercial houses and the night.

I go among them since I must; transformed
Upon the sidewalks, I assume their eyes
And go misshapen with them to their charmed
Arenas, their contrived realities
Of cinema and song; we leave unharmed
Though death is neighbor with his face transformed.

Assembled underground, we wait for trains
That move through darkness like the track of time;
We, cripples, negatives of promise, lean
Our crutch of bones upon a scribbled beam;
While the loud year beats impartially, like rain
On eloquent marble, we await our trains.

Night of this night, there is a prayer in me
Who read my destination in their love.
O may this cancer and this leprosy
The sovereign brand of our conjunction prove.
This is my world among the beasts who see;
In them I endure the night, and they in me.

HARRY BROWN

The Drill

I WATCH them on the drill field, the awkward and the
grave,
The slow to action and the easily incensed,
The tall plowboys, the pale clerks, the fast men with a dollar,

The frightened adolescents, and those whose eyes explode
Like bombs or, like exhausted coals, lie dead.

They wheel and turn. The eternal convolutions
Of close-order drill—Right Flank or To the Rear—
Hold them as though, somnambulists, they moved
In the imposing caverns of some recurring dream
Where the only escape is to awake. But the night is very long.

The feet march on through the heavy summer morning.
The bodies are anonymous in their cotton khaki clothes,
And the faces, too, are all of a piece. Concealed at last from life
Are the weak chin, the nose too large, the forehead rutted and
worn,
And the eyes too small, and the lips too fleshy or thin.

For the moment the accounts are all settled, the goods have all
been sold,
The last delivery made, the last essay sent to the printer,
The elevator gone on its last strict voyage, the truck turned the
last corner,
The last issue of bonds taken up, the last class attended,
The last row planted, the last payment made on the house.

The platoon moves past me on the field of summer,
The gray dust rising from the grassless ground,
Each man with his rifle resting on his shoulder,
Each man with his bayonet slapping his thigh, each man
With his eyes fixed on the man ahead, the corporals counting
cadence.

The platoon moves past me into the mists of summer
And disappears into the darkness of our time,
A body of men, none known, none recognized,
Crossing my road for a little space. They go
Into the sun and the summer and the waiting war.

Seen for an instant and gone. Yet I felt between us
A bond not of country but of faith and love,

And I thought of an old phrase: "Whither thou goest,
I will go." And it seemed that the summer morning
Spoke out in a voice like song, that the air was full of singing.

And something said, "They come and they go away,
The patient and the small. They go away into the sun,
Their names are forgotten and their few works also,
But when they go they take their weapons with them,
And they leave behind them houses heavy with honor."

And I thought: *It is enough*. As I stood in a field
In Virginia in deep summer, while all around me
The trees dipped and the grass rustled, I heard the sound
Of platoons of men marching toward the crouching future,
And the voices of our approaching generations.

Parade

IT was a valorous music poured upon us
In that bright morning, and it was as though
The whole dour earth were moved by those sweet sound
That played around our bodies and in motion
Conceived in us a love, but not of loving.
We might have been alone upon the sun.

We were then pierced by pride that was entrancing,
And stood there, made of sweat and steel and polish,
Each with his latest thought his last thought wounding,
A being in a being. The white music
Caught us in clouds of sound and swirled us skyward.
We were aware of nothing but our fires.

Then suddenly I lived beyond my breathing,
Dissolved the mists of music, saw beside me
Myself in such a stance, in various guises,
The eternal soldier; and the ground was stirring
Beneath my feet, and cities falling down.
And madmen played gold music in my ears.

LLOYD FRANKENBERG

The Sea

IN the midmost of ocean
the water lifts its arms dreaming of spars;
the world is very round, projects its roundness
past all the poles, beyond the one horizon
on that bald ocean overhead, the sky
where swim the worlds like fish in soundless waters.

Imposing its single structure on the sky
and drawing thence its variable mood
of bright confusion, gloom and equable
conformity, the ocean goes scotfree
of other obligation but to pay
the moon its due respects, discharged like spouse.

Left to its own enormous devices the sea
in timeless reverie conceives of life,
being itself the world in pantomime.

Predicting past and future in one long
drawn breath it blends its tides with dawn,
rolls in panoramic sleight-of-hand
creation out of chaos endlessly;

all forms revealed in fluid architecture
flowing like time as if time were turned back:
undreamed-of wars all happening at once
(what rage pent up in atoms: do the drops
take toll of one another? no the sea
had not dreamed this)

but like a savage plays
 archaic symmetries and simple shapes:
 builds promontories, houses lakes, holds out
 mirages of itself, erects straw cliffs
 hurdled with ease;

or lolling all its length
 coiled and Niled, in coat of mail tilts evil
 complete with scale and hiss, smitten to sculpture,
 to iron leaves, to flame, to birds flying
 in and out of fluted, spandreed, spired
 buildings out of all time swaying, crumpling
 in scaffoldings of spray.

And then the flowers
 all petal and no stem; then finned and ferned,
 the leaping swordfish an effrontery
 to all its backs, all life presumptuous

and those looking too long upon its wake
 who thought to make themselves immortal too,
 taking it at its word, instruct it now

(old moonface cratered and sunksocketed,
 seamywrinkled, picked and pocked with waves,
 the waves all faces lifted looking around,
 hair dripping across their foreheads or flung back
 for a last despairing gasp before they drown)

for now the last least vestige of the air
 that gave the ocean its free hand with space,
 gave fins wings roots and legs to walk the sky,
 withdraws and leaves it still.

Now on its sleeve
 it wears the heart that every shipwreck finds;
 lies flat, unworked by other element

and in this state of utter unbelief
 that keeps it what it is, like nothing else,

smoother than glass, stiller than the dead,
its natural supine and spineless self
that never will arise but from without
(yet even now protests the least intrusion)

believing not that all its mimicry
has ever come to pass, how perfectly
mirrors God's face, the workings of his mind.

Young Love

SHE it is where they lie down
Staring long into his stare
Tries with little eyelids there
Whether eyes were blue or brown.

Laughs with teeth against his own
Asking, Am I always fair?
Will you always always care?
Tracing sinew, tracing bone

Till she know him and can tell
And can place her finger where
Sound from breath and breath from air
Came and went. And come to dwell

Closer with him day to day,
Little dare by little dare
Death has quite undone his hair,
Quite has kissed his lips away.

Hide in the Heart

I.

HERE is no shadow but cloudshadow and nightshadow
Moving across and rolling away and leaving
Only the purple avenues the ant
Drags his weight across from here to there
Between the leaning towers of his town.

Here are no voices but the gull's hard lot
Easing his discontent with all the beach,
Abusive tongues of terns, rheumatic crows'
Dry commentaries concerning tomorrow's weather
And pipers fleeing the sound of their own lament.

And the wind's singing is before all music
Picking the strings of grass and thumping the roof
And all the stops of the ocean to be pulled out
When anger is the howling of the wind
And all armies the marches of the sea.

And mornings bringing the white lies of peace,
The rags of truce upon the sea and sky,
Ambassadorial breeze from cloud to wave,
All solved and settled under a smiling sun
Blandly agreeing his hands to everything.

Until the fog with sidelong stratagem
Confers in huddled whispers with the earth—
And ships and birds are asking their way about
Of the whistling buoy that keeps its courage up
Through the long dark and vistas of the mist—

Then lifts again, its mission elsewhere
And leaves us this again our isle of quiet:
Surrounded with seas of grass and the glassy sea
Here in the sweet unreasonable weather
We think us safe, we think us housed in peace.

II.

All day the storm stood off from about our door.
The tongues of sand lay panting in the sun,
We listening to the sounds of listless water
With wisps of ragtime over the dunes from town
And scraps of headline: BOMBING ALMERIA.

Who brought this newspaper in like contraband
To poison the horizons of our minds?
All day the sun was stored serenity
Before the cloud fulfilled its promised rain.
Now seeing the fire-edged cloud our thought is of war.

Our sea was water where we drowned our thoughts.
We plunged and lay like time—not like this time.
Our sea was not an endless belt of bullets
Round after round transmitted to the breech
To riddle time to tatters and red teeth.

Now more than ever we do not know how long
This little space of peace will be our own.
The nations run like nightmare toward the repeated
Dream's end and beyond the end and beyond,
Toward the waking up screaming and it's true! it's true!

III.

Nations perpetuate the fatal motion
Letting their anger go from them with no
Power to retract, to make amends and an end.
The people standing under the balconies
Look up and become part of what they see.

The cannon standing at stiff-armed salute
Discharge their duties in the innocent air.
The bleak and bankrupt bones are all there is

To pay revenge its dividend and hate
Its pebble dropped, its circle widening.

IV.

There is no hiding in these island seas.
The air is full of forebodings of disaster
The gulls come up dead on the tide. It is one to them
Whether the world hold fish. The sandfleas dance
Burning alive on the phosphorescent beach.

The stars are a regiment of fixed bayonets;
The steelgrey seas a rank upon rank of helmets.
Clouds march and countermarch. Winds marshal them;
Roll on their spokes guncarriages of thunder.
The army of grass is led in all directions.

A large drop falls and that is all. The storm
Wheels to the skyline; leaves a sunspace; waits.
These little silly bombardments are but a device
To larger ends; rally the peace-protectors
About false standards, his eye upon another.

V.

All day the storm stood off in a rift of cloud.
We thought us safe, we thought us housed in peace,
Ringed in by sun, chalked off by grass, passed by
In a lull of the storm, in a quiet isle. Till night
Darkened our door and the storm broke and the sea

Moving in fury upon the enduring beach
We put our windows against the rain, we drew
Bolts on the wind and shuttered out the storm.
At night the four walls shook like a heart in the gale
Shedding a light like blood on the troubled darkness.

Four walls in the wind are the wind's mouse and we
The heart in the mouse. The lightning lifts a paw,
Purrs in its throat and lets the paw fall slack.
The tail of the wind stirs lazily, shakes the floor
And we are alone with the taste of mouth on mouth.

VI.

Hide in the heart. There is no help without.
The strong winds ramp about the world tonight.
The heart is wide enough to move about.
The heart is tall. In a world too small for flight
This is the only border out of doubt.

The light comes in as through the hand's devotion.
The world is held in the hollow of this hand.
Its own sea with its own moon-made motion
Rolls upon the shores of its own land.
Before all singing is the music of this ocean.

Find out this music pounding through the wrists.
Stop out the sounds of the feet tramping the roof.
Let the rain beat with all its mailed fists.
The heart is the only timber to be proof
Against all thunderclaps and lightningtwists.

Hide in this roof until the storm has been;
Till fear leaves us under the eaves of the blood
And one by one arising let them in
Disarming at the door the roaring flood,
The infantry of rain and the strong wind.

 JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA

There Came You Wishing Me

THERE came you wishing me * * *
 And so I said * * *
 And then you turned your head
 With the greatest beauty

Smiting me mercilessly!
 And then you said * * *
 So that my heart was made
 Into the strangest country . . .

* * * you said, so beautifully,
 So that an angel came
 To hear that name,
 And we caught him tremulously!

Be Beautiful, Noble, Like the Antique An.

BE beautiful, noble, like the antique ant,
 Who bore the storms as he bore the sun,
 Wearing neither gown nor helmet,
 Though he was archbishop and soldier:
 Wore only his own flesh.

Salute characters with gracious dignity:
 Though what these are is left to
 Your own terms. Exact: the universe is
 Not so small but these will be found
 Somewhere. Exact: they will be found.

Speak with great moderation: but think
With great fierceness, burning passion:
Though what the ant thought
No annals reveal, nor his descendants
Break the seal.

Trace the tracelessness of the ant,
Every ant has reached this perfection.
As he comes, so he goes,
Flowing as water flows,
Essential but secret like a rose.

God Said, "I Made a Man"

GOD said, "I made a man
Out of clay—
But so bright he, he spun
Himself to brightest Day

Till he was all shining gold,
And oh,
He was lovely to behold!
But in his hands held he a bow

Aimed at me who created
Him. And I said,
'Wouldst murder me
Who am thy Fountainhead!'

Then spoke he the man of gold:
'I will not
Murder thee! I do but
Measure thee. Hold

Thy peace! And this I did.
But I was curious
Of this so regal head.
'Give thy name!'—'Sir! Genius'."

Now, If You Will Look in My Brain.

NOW, if you will look in my brain
You will see not Because
But Cause—
The strict Rose whose clean
Light utters all my pain.
Dwelleth there my God
With a strict Rod
And a most luminous mien.

And He whippeth! lo how
He whippeth! O see
The rod's velocity
In utterest unmercy
Carve, inflict upon this brow
The majesty of its doomed Now.

My Mouth Is Very Quiet

MY mouth is very quiet
Reverencing the luminance of my brain:
If words must find an outlet
They must work with jewelled pain.

They must cut a way immaculate
To leave the brain incorrupt:
They must repay their Debt
Like archangels undropt.

The miracle of a word is to my mouth
The miracle of God in my brain:
Archangels holding to His North and South,
His East and West by an inviolable chain.

An archangel upon my mouth
May blow his silver trumpet:

But he holds to his North or South,
Blows—and again is quiet.

The Way My Ideas Think Me

THE way my ideas think me
Is the way I unthink God.
As in the name of heaven I make hell
That is the way the Lord says me.

And all is adventure and danger
And I roll Him off cliffs and mountains
But fast as I am to push Him off
Fast am I to reach Him below.

And it may be then His turn to push me off,
I wait breathless for that terrible second:
And if He push me not, I turn around in anger:
"O art thou the God I would have!"

Then He pushes me and I plunge down, down!
And when He comes to help me up
I put my arms around Him, saying, "Brother,
Brother." . . . This is the way we are.

Saw God Dead but Laughing

SAW God dead but laughing.
Uttered the laugh for Him.
Heard my skull crack with doom
Tragedian laughing!

Peered into the cracked skull—
Saw the tragic monkhood
In the shape of God's deathhead
Laughter upon its mouth a jewel.

AMERICAN POETRY

Jewel bright, O Jewel bright,
 Laughter of the Lord.
 Laughter with eternity immured
 O laugh bright, laugh bright.

Then did the Lord laugh louder
 I laughing for Him,
 I from the heart's honeycomb
 Feeding braver, braver,

Till all the universe was Laughter
 But the Laughter of the Lord
 O the Laughter of His Word
 That could laugh only—after His murder.

Mostly Are We Mostless

MOSTLY are we mostless
 And neverness is all we become.
 The tiger is tigerless
 The flame is flameless.

Dig up Time like a tiger
 Dig up the beautiful grave
 The grave is graveless
 And God is Godless.

I saw myself reflected
 In the great eye of the grave.
 I saw God helpless
 And headless there.

Until I put my head on Him.
 Then he uprose superb.
 He took the body of me
 And crumpled me to immortality.

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